



Journal of a Fast

Fredrick W. Smith

Journal of a Fast

Fredrick W. Smith

On Friday, March 19, 1971, Fredrick Smith stopped eating—deliberately. For the next thirty days he worked as he had strength, read, fought his body, meditated, slept sporadically, and kept a meticulous journal. This is the extraordinary record of his odyssey to the innermost recesses of his being.

Paradoxically—or so it may seem to anyone who has never fasted—Smith anticipates his ordeal with exhilaration and expectation. He mentions hunger only a few times in passing, as though once one decides to fast the thought of food simply recedes as the fast progresses, further and further from consciousness. Instead, he focuses on the changes he senses in his body—a gradual lightening and clearing of the energy centers known as “chakras”—as well as on his elevated sensual awareness of his surroundings. Thus, we receive a vividly drawn portrait of a man attempting to leave his body behind for a time, to approach a pure state of spiritual awareness, and then to return gradually to “normal” living.

But why by such means, one may ask? Indeed, Smith wonders himself. Drawing upon his astonishing repertoire of theological, philosophical, and psychological knowledge, Smith ponders the meanings of his fast and tries to relate his insights to the writings of Jacob Boehme, Jung, and Lao Tzu, among many others. At the end of the fast—terminated by the same will with which it was begun—Smith has clearly surmounted a large obstacle in his search for spiritual “centering” and self-realization. *JOURNAL OF A FAST* is a profound testament to the possibilities for spiritual exploration and discovery within the confines of everyday life. Fredrick Smith points out one path and takes us with him on it.

SCHOCKEN BOOKS INC.
200 MADISON AVENUE
NEW YORK CITY 10016

ISBN 0-8052-3609-0

Jacket design by Michael Flanagan

Schocken Books of Related Interest:

Sri Aurobindo

The Essential Aurobindo

Blair, Lawrence

Rhythms of Vision: The Changing Patterns of Belief

Eliade, Mircea

Patanjali and Yoga

Iyengar, B.K.S.

Light on Yoga

Vasto, Lanza del

Gandhi to Vinoba: The New Pilgrimage

Vasto, Lanza del

*The Principles and Precepts
of the Return to the Obvious*

Vasto, Lanza del

Return to the Source

Wrench, G. T.

*The Wheel of Health: The Sources of
Long Life and Health Among the Hunza*

To mother

from
Fredrick

Journal of a Fast

Journal of a Fast

First published by SCHOCKEN BOOKS 1976

Copyright © 1972 by Fredrick W. Smith

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Smith, Fredrick W.

Journal of a fast.

1. Fasting. 2. Smith, Fredrick W. I. Title.

BV5055.S6 1976 248'.2'0924 [B] 75-36493

Manufactured in the United States of America

Journal of a Fast

Fredrick W. Smith

Schocken Books • New York

Friday, March 19, 1971

For several years I have been looking forward to an extended fast. This might seem a strange, perhaps even a perverse ambition. Why would anyone look forward to torturing himself? But then some people even enjoy operations. Perhaps that proves that among humans anything is possible. And among all the humanly possible things there must also be an urgent desire to starve.

The desire to fast, or to undertake other ascetic practices, is usually interpreted as a perverse desire to experience pain. Or perhaps those who torture themselves believe such sacrifices are pleasing to God. Or it may be a deal to exchange pain now for pleasure hereafter. One forgoes comfort in this world in order to enjoy comfort eternally in the world to come.

Although everyone knows such theories, they have never interested me or any other practicing ascetic I have ever heard of. They are explanations developed strictly by and for outsiders, and they miss the point completely. Perhaps ascetics themselves would find it difficult to provide better or more rational explanations. But probably every one of them could.

In any case it must be obvious that a person who does such things is struggling to attain something he feels is of great value. And whatever that is, it must

appear to him to be more worthwhile than any of the immediate and shorter-range comforts, conveniences, or pleasures that could be experienced more easily.

I must admit that when I first met people who actually practiced fasting, this technique immediately attracted and fascinated me. That was more than twenty-five years ago, and since that time I have experimented with a variety of fasts and diets and have met with equally varying degrees of success and failure. My attraction to fasting may be similar to the attraction some people seem to feel for faraway idealized lands—perhaps Greece, or Tibet, or Israel, or a South Sea Island, or Antarctica, or the moon.

Fasting has always seemed to me not merely a fascinating technique, but an available, powerful, almost magical ancient key that might be able to unlock doors or possibly remove the heavy chains holding us back from deep and high places that could be interesting and worthwhile to visit—or where we might want to live. Here could be a most promising spiritual and physical adventure.

And now it also seems possible, and in fact quite probable, that if this experience were candidly written down so that others could follow along, then it might become a worthwhile adventure for them as well. Or, at the very least, it might suggest new and valuable ways for others to exercise their own individual talents.

What of the element of danger that might be involved in a long fast? It would be foolhardy to say that no such danger exists. But I am convinced that with a proper understanding of the technique, which isn't difficult, the element of danger, even in a very long fast, is probably not great. And the physical advantages derived from it could be many.

On the other hand, the dangers from the spiritual

point of view are more complex and difficult. And in fact, it is these uniquely spiritual aspects of fasting that have always been my primary concern. Whatever the physical risks involved or physical advantages to be gained from fasting, these have always seemed to me—and for my present purposes still do seem—to be altogether secondary.

The use of fasting as a means of overcoming disease and of regaining health is fairly well known and is widely practiced throughout the world. The practice is as ancient as it is widespread, being one of the methods used by Hippocrates and many other healers of ancient as well as modern times. The natural and rational basis of fasting in acute pathology is evident to anyone who has ever observed or cared for animals. An early and sure symptom of acute disease or injury is the rejection of food. A distressed dog, cat, horse, or cow refuses the nourishment it cannot use and doesn't at the moment need. Conversely, the forced feeding of the sick, whose symptoms may in fact be a result of excessive or improper eating, is a painful and almost universal practice the sad results of which are many times only too evident.

The spiritual advantages, and dangers, of fasting are much more subtle and less easily observed. Many have learned by experience, however, as I have done, that these advantages and dangers are also very real. As for the spiritual dangers, I for one believe them to be more threatening than any of the presumed physical dangers. No doubt this sense of threat, as well as the awareness of spiritual dangers, comes from my own particular orientation to the technique of fasting. Others with a simpler and more purely physical orientation to the subject might almost completely miss this spiritual

aspect—the values as well as the dangers. One tends to find the thing he is looking for.

I feel that I am armed to a certain extent against at least some of the spiritual dangers that have in the past been associated with my experiences of fasting. How true this is remains to be seen. Like any test, or contest, or the meeting and overcoming of an obstacle, the proof of the matter lies in the attempt, the struggle, the immediate outcome, and the accomplishment. The final result, or accomplishment, especially when the effort required must be severe, can never be perfectly foreseen. So far, my own accomplishments with this technique have been mixed. In general, I believe they have been valuable and progressive. But with more energy and less understanding than I can probably muster at the present time, I have also met with severe, decisive, and disorganizing defeat.

Every one of us, whether we recognize it or not, is continually involved in a spiritual struggle. Sometimes we win gloriously. More often we are ignominiously routed. Sometimes the battle passes completely over our battered and unconscious heads. And at other times, we hope, it rages far beneath our feet. But more often, if we are among those who take themselves, the world, and the cosmos seriously, we struggle day after day steadily, wearily, and altogether inconclusively. There seems to be no winning or losing. And at last we may even tend to lose sight of the possibility of winning—or perhaps, even, of losing.

To me, fasting seems to be a means of stealing a march on the adversary, a way to strike an unusual and unexpected blow for liberty, a method of using conscious rational action to confront, weaken, and perhaps overcome essentially unconscious difficulties, shortcomings, and dilemmas. From my own experiences and

that of others I have discovered that the technique of fasting can be quite effective in this struggle, but it can also be completely futile and self-defeating. Everything depends on our intelligence, our strength, our timing, our luck—and our guidance. “He who accounts things as easy will not be approved by the bright heaven.”

Together with most other people, I am more or less bogged down in our common spiritual mud. Although in the past I may have made a little pleasant progress in the direction I feel men ought to go, and even though I may be advancing sluggishly at the present time, still, whatever has been done, or whatever may be happening now isn't in any way comparable to what I believe could be done, should be done, and in fact *must* be done.

That all of us today are living in a state of spiritual crisis is so obvious it has become trite. Perhaps men and women have always lived in this state. If so, that truth has never been more evident than it is today. It is my view that we have entered a crucial turning point, perhaps *the* crucial turning point in human history. Very important things are happening, and very important things will continue to happen in the immediate future. World-shaking events take place rapidly now, and their speed can only accelerate tomorrow.

Each of us has been chosen to live his life in this most interesting and most important time. What a privilege it is to find ourselves clothed in this human form here at the critical hinge of destiny. But are we as alive, as intelligent, as effective, as *awake* as we should be? Of course we aren't. For the most part we are asleep, ineffective, foolish, and dead to the highest and most valuable aspects of the cosmos and of our own nature.

Is fasting a technique that could help us to awaken

and see more effectively into the realities and possibilities latent in our present situation? I believe that it well might be, and I am willing to venture out on that assumption. And although such a venture is not as difficult as most folks might imagine it to be, nevertheless I can't expect it to be easy either.

So this prospect lies before me now like a tremendous mountain glistening against the sky—quiet, serene, formidable, forbidding, but also infinitely enticing. The climbing, the resting, the fatigue, the dangers, the values, and the losses must be borne alone. I intend to climb where no one may ever know, and to write what no one may ever read. But this isn't cause for either sorrow or regret. In many ways I am uniquely fitted to do exactly this. And also, I have tried to fit myself for it.

Much of the way I know from my own and others' experience. I can recognize, for example, some sheer cliffs that have stopped me in the past—where I have disastrously fallen.

Each one of us has his own unique difficulties and problems. I'm not a monk supported by an institution or even by a substantial tradition. The society in which I live has no interest at all in supporting the things that most interest me. I happen to be a blue-collar working man with the responsibilities and obligations of supporting a family, responsibilities and obligations which aren't always easy to carry out. So the reader can be assured that at least some of the difficulties encountered will be similar to his own.

Here before us lies our beautiful, high, shining mountain. Waiting now, beckoning us to the summits of its farthest vision. What will we answer? Will we go? Can we refuse? The far journey begins with our first step.

Wednesday, March 24

First day of the fast. Hadn't thought of beginning quite so soon. For one thing, there will still be cold weather, which I would prefer to avoid while fasting. And there's work that has to be done, which I would also prefer to avoid while fasting.

Some work around the place can hardly be avoided. Business, however, is slow right now, and my partner can probably take care of it. But he plans to be away for a few days beginning tomorrow, so until he returns, the service calls might have to be taken care of.

The natural end of a fast is whenever one comes to the end of his readily available energy reserves. After that, one begins to starve. And since my purpose is to fast rather than to starve, I must also try to conserve my energies in every way possible. This doesn't exclude a little exercise, but I know by experience that merely standing up and walking a little may be strenuous exercise after a month or more of fasting.

Actually, I don't know the very best way to conserve one's energy. Some doctors who fast acutely or chronically ill patients demand complete bed rest. But bed rest in itself tends to weaken one. My intention is to rest as much as possible, and whatever things have to be done will provide enough, and probably much more than enough, exercise. In this way, I hope, the fast can

be carried out easily and smoothly, without too much fuss or displacement of the rest of my family's routines or economy.

A service call in Austin this morning. Took the truck and measured the mileage: 8.8 miles one way. Three and a half miles of that was good graveled road that we regularly take to town. The rest of the way I took a narrow, little-used dirt road through some rough and interesting back country. Very dry hills and ravines, impassable in wet weather. In places the hills rise several hundred feet above the road, and in places the ravines are several hundred feet beneath. Too narrow to pass, for the most part, but the road was dry and good enough for a passenger car. A friend who lived in Israel told us these parts of our country are very similar to some of the desert and wilderness areas there.

Stopped awhile to take in the country and to make some notes on a few ideas about the fast. The hills are quite rounded, with deep arroyos between them. The cover is dry grass, cactus, tumbleweed, clumps of short sage, and lots of dark porous volcanic rock that might have rained down from the sky at one time. No possibility of ever cultivating this. Several flocks of sheep graze it each year. The air is chilly but the sun bright and warm. The earliest violets are beginning to appear, about a quarter of an inch across—very delicate, unobtrusive, and beautiful.

After making a few notes about the purpose of my fasting, I decided to begin it now, or at least to make a trial run to see how it might go. This might seem like the boy who bet he could eat a whole watermelon and then ate one right before the test just to make sure he could do it. Actually, this is a day I fast anyway. A few years ago a small group of people concerned about the disastrous effects of the war on Indo-China, and on

America, decided to fast one day a week as long as the war lasted. We have also done other things, but this was one small private and non-political thing we decided to do.

One member of the group, a Catholic, proposed Friday as the traditional fast day, and some of us still fast each Friday. The personal advantages of this became so evident to me that I decided to add Wednesdays. This is also traditional—two fast days each week. This is a pattern I have followed for several years, counting the days as Orthodox Jews and early Christians counted them, from starlight to starlight, the seasonal variations of day and night lending an interesting and natural rhythm and movement to that basic pattern.

At that time I also decided to forgo breakfast, and during the week, at least, to eat two meals daily, only one of which would be cooked. Also, eating between meals, which happened to be a bad habit of mine, was eliminated. However, Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays are still free days, except that I find I feel much better if I avoid breakfast and continue to eat moderately. But sometimes, if I happen to be reading or writing late into the night, which I habitually do, and if it isn't a fast day, then I eat a little fruit.

These patterns have been developed by trial and error to fit my own personal attitudes and economy, and those of my family. They have now become so habitual and fixed that I no longer question or think about them. Furthermore, this habitual frame of mind is an advantage that I have no desire at all to give up. I feel that these habits have benefited me physically in many ways and have helped bring my wayward appetite under control.

For many years I used to go round and round with myself over this particular matter. Sometimes I would

be on top, and many times my appetite would be on top of me. But since developing these patterns of eating, my appetite has been clearly and unquestionably under control. Now I eat what and when my reason and intelligence judge to be proper and nourishing—and not otherwise. And this is how I prefer the matter to stand.

So my last meal, Tuesday before sunset, was neither pretentious nor unusual. I hadn't thought or expected it to be in any way different, since it hadn't occurred to me to begin the fast just then. I believe we had fish cakes, fresh bread, and canned vegetables from our garden.

The primary purpose of my fast is to attempt to see more deeply into myself, to see more deeply, if possible, into the significance of things happening around us on a worldwide historical scale, and especially to see more deeply into the meaning of the physical phenomena that surround us—and that we continually take for granted. But in fact, material substance is a very remarkable, a very miraculous stuff. Some men and women *have* seen deeply and intuitively into nature, so I am convinced that it is at least possible. I think particularly of Jacob Boehme.

Many of us tend to ignore or even to be scornful of the purely spiritual benefits that modern science offers us. I have in mind not so much men's physical mastery over nature, but rather those spiritual advantages deriving from the intellectual and factual truths that modern science presents to us.

Unfortunately, there are some who believe that scientific knowledge of, for example, the age of a stone, or the distance across the galaxy, or the composition of a star or an atom, or the chemical and genetic organization of living things somehow must weaken or

destroy any substantial working faith in man's deep spiritual life and destiny.

But that belief must surely be an error. Those opponents of science who want to go "back to the Bible," "back to the church," "back to primitive Christianity," or even "back to God," want to travel in the wrong direction. They are not only wrong theoretically, but the very proposition they present is impossible. How does one go "back to God"? Perhaps the clearest example of this fallacy appears at the end of a widely circulated book on church history by a popular modern theologian. He pictures Christians looking "back at the cross." But no Christian has ever done that, and none will ever do it. In spite of that author's exalted scholarly titles and respected position of authority, he has obviously never seen the cross, since he has such a perfectly wrong idea about where it is. Every Christian who has ever lived has looked upward and *forward* in order to see the cross. One never looks back in order to see that!

Those who look backward for spiritual nourishment obviously embrace a merely historical philosophy which is no longer alive. "No longer being delivered to the saints" is the more apt biblical phraseology. Such persons have made a fundamental, perhaps *the* fundamental error. The gospel, or "good news," that Jesus taught is that the kingdom of God is "at hand." And if it was at hand two thousand years ago, it is at least as much and probably even more "at hand" today.

The fact is that, so far, the human race has merely been working on preliminaries—kindergarten stuff, as it were. Every spiritually wise or perceptive man or woman who has ever lived would agree with that idea. The big show isn't even on the road yet. It all still lies in the future. And if we intend to be a part of that, now or ever, then we had better begin to bestir ourselves

out of this present lethargy—drugged, as we seem to be, into a deep coma by the illusions of this present unfortunate and unrepresentative situation.

The assumption I am making is that this absolutely stupendous and infinitely complex fabric of nature needs (and very badly needs) spiritual and intellectual direction and guidance—and that men and women are instruments especially designed by the creative power of the universe to exercise that direction and guidance. But how far we have fallen from that high purpose and responsibility!

So seeing intuitively into nature doesn't appear to be an achievement beyond natural human abilities—or responsibilities! Rather, it may well be something very necessary for us to develop and to do. And in some small measure we are all continually doing it. Every sensation and perception is basically intuitive. It's how we tell red from green, or sound from silence. What we need is the same thing far more acutely and at much deeper levels.

Does God see the world through our eyes? That should be the case. If it were, what then would we see? And what would we be? Obviously, we would always be looking at the kingdom of God. Not at some faraway place, but right here where each one of us happens to be living right now. And we would be deep mysterious beings, subjects and objects of an infinite divine wisdom. Our lives might or might not be less painful and tragic then, but certainly they would become supremely meaningful and of greater value than anything else existing in nature.

Can fasting assist us in such an enterprise? I believe there is a good possibility that it can. And the mere possibility of its being a key to help unlock these

treasures hidden in the human spirit makes whatever small sacrifices are involved seem well worthwhile.

On the other hand, my experience leads me to expect the results of this or other disciplines to be less immediately obvious than I would hope them to be. Whatever benefits they might involve often develop imperceptibly and appear only after the passage of time—perhaps a long passage of time. The most nourishing fruit can only mature slowly. It couldn't possibly be otherwise. We are so impatient. But the creative spirit within nature is infinitely patient. It can work very quickly, but more often it works slowly over many years—hundreds, thousands, millions, billions.

The service call in Austin was a stopped-up toilet and a leaky shower. Both of them were running water through the floor and into the apartment below. A rented place and a Chicano family. A nice-looking young woman, very small, shy, and quiet, as so many of them are. Two very beautiful children who helped me. Bernadette, four, and Bobby, three. The work took about an hour. A paring knife in the toilet which the auger brought out. Often the obstruction goes down and can cause trouble farther on, and then one doesn't immediately know whether or not the problem has been solved. But when a comb, or a hair curler, or a bar of soap, or any one of a thousand unusual things comes into view, one can be fairly certain the problem has been solved. A few fittings rerouted the shower head to stop it from leaking and spraying water out the back and down into the apartment below.

Returned by the back way again. It is now 2:40 P.M. Have been writing steadily, and have finished this much under today's dateline. It is time now for a bit of meditation and relaxation, perhaps even a nap. More work to do tonight and tomorrow.

3:20 P.M. Rested, but didn't sleep. And now a favorable omen. I heard that the Supersonic Transport (SST) has just been voted down by the Senate. Perhaps something of a turning point in history—and a hopeful one. Am starting to rewrite and then will type what I've written today.

9:20 P.M. Into the second day, but not exactly the way I had wanted. Had hoped to have more things finished so I could take it pretty easy, but have been working steadily, and will be tonight for a while yet. Wanted to fill our pond and cistern while I still had the energy to do it, and our water ditch will be going dry any time now. In the process of cleaning up the ditch I've been running some water over the front yard, as things here are exceptionally dry for this time of year. So I have been out for a few hours slogging around in the mud, shoveling along the ditch, burning up energy I'd rather have saved. And it may be several more hours before I can go up and close down the headgate.

Also separated out some sheep to take to market tomorrow—a more difficult job than it should be because we aren't set up to do it. Going out of the sheep business. Have had as many as twenty, but now down to six. The neighbors' dogs have more or less put us out of business, as well as affording us some hunting at midnight, which is the time they usually attack the sheep. When they were doing the most damage I could have killed at least one of them, but didn't realize they were hurting the flock so badly. Just shot over their heads in the moonlight. Hate to shoot what I can't recognize clearly. After that we had more purpose but less target. Not that I have the least hesitancy about shooting dogs that kill sheep or bite people. Just don't

want to shoot the wrong ones. But now without sheep there should be less trouble.

We still have milk goats, but they have horns and defend themselves a little and so have less attraction for dogs. Goats are much more intelligent and harder to kill than sheep. Sheep never complain. They die quickly and easily. Goats complain plenty and die much more reluctantly.

Very pleased to hear about the SST. The President says it is a reversal of the American tradition. It is true that America has a tradition for being the world's greatest wastrel and polluter. Certainly it is time for that tradition to be reversed.

America also has other and quite different traditions, even though most of the people on public forums choose to ignore them. And these other traditions have less in common with SST's, space shots, and atom bombs than they do with some very opposite ideas that are far more appealing to me than those loud, gaudy, and completely unsatisfying traditions.

Some very excellent American traditions were native and indigenous to this country before the coming of the white man. Other good ideas came in the minds and hearts of immigrants or were developed among the millions of sturdy people who have been born here. Johannes Kelpius, Conrad Biesel, John Woolman, and John Chapman are examples that come to mind right at the moment.

The reader may be disappointed at not learning about my hunger pangs, but my view is that they are more or less mythical creatures, and I'd rather not have any. In fact, many hunger symptoms are almost entirely matters of habit and expectation. Some people seem to wake up hungry, but I never have. Evenings are the difficult times for me. True, my stomach is beginning

to get empty and happens to be talking to me at this very moment. But I am also telling it to shut up and forget about that—and I know that it will.

If one entertains the idea of eating all kinds of supposedly delightful things, then no doubt hunger becomes ravenous. But for a while, at least, I intend to entertain the very different and in some ways even more delightful idea of *not* eating.

10:37 P.M. Cistern full, and just returned from shutting down the headgate—a couple hundred yards through the field. Very black night. Cloudy, but also a few stars. Looked like it could snow this afternoon, but it didn't. Temperature: 38°. Will read awhile in the gospels, and then to bed.

Thursday, March 25

3:25 P.M. Slept well, but awoke with a deeply depressed feeling. Sheep loaded fairly easily. Took them to the Delta auction sale this morning. Service call to Mattie Hinote's. Sewer line stopped, and septic-tank top needed to be dug out and opened. Not difficult.

Mattie, 78, a real pioneer character. Taking care of great-grandson less than two. Neighbor phoned for her to come help drive a straying cow—somewhat of an imposition. Her granddaughter went. When we worked at her place several years ago she insisted on cooking lunch for us. That is how it always used to be when one worked out. Mattie told of taking a stand on a knoll above her place during hunting season. Shot at deer to frighten them away, making some hunters very angry. Lots of grit and backbone.

Worked steadily till after one, but nearly two hours of rest, prone, including a nap, left me much refreshed.

Into the fast now. Tongue coated and breath no doubt bad—the two most obvious symptoms of a faster. Called a young neighbor I had talked to several weeks ago about getting some enthusiastic young folks from California to come and give an injection to the dying local community church. She was interested but cautious. She talked to the minister and he showed her

Scripture to make her very careful about anything like that.

"We were afraid . . ." No doubt the organized religionists were also afraid of Jesus, and rightly so. I'll keep stirring the matter up, but not hopeful. Then later received a letter from our boy in college, age 20, quite religious and much squarer than his father. Some "Jesus freaks" been visiting campus. Fine folks, having a big impact; really "know their Bibles."

Will rewrite and type up some of the stuff already written.

10:20 P.M. So far everything proceeding easily, which was expected. Some inexperienced fasters encounter their worst difficulties during the first several days. That is about how long it takes for the stomach to empty and settle down to rest. But I have covered this particular ground many times and am quite familiar with it.

Have had a bit of trouble with my right leg today—one of my weak points. For years I've noticed that if I drive all day, that leg becomes somewhat numb and uneasy. And several times, each lasting a few days, I have had what has been diagnosed as sciatica, a nervous disease. The books say it is an extremely painful affliction, and it is unpleasant, to put it mildly. The affected limb gradually becomes more and more painful and then suddenly becomes easy again, a process that continues in cycles of about a half hour. Perhaps the fast will help straighten that out.

Have also noticed a slight internal draining of the sinuses, another weak spot. Years ago, when we lived in the Ohio valley, the ragweed that farmers cultivate there bothered me every fall. Here, close to the mountains, there have been only the vaguest indications of

hay fever. But the passages are very clear, and the discharge merely requires a clearing of the throat occasionally. A few years back it was imagined that these discharges came from the brain. And medications were especially designed to encourage that supposedly beneficial cleansing action. This has always appealed to me as a neat idea, and I have been known to recommend it to those who seem overly eager to purge themselves and others.

One slightly unpleasant aspect of fasting is a fuzziness and sometimes a bad taste in the mouth—sometimes very bad. This fuzziness is beginning to appear now, and scrubbing out the mouth vigorously is quite refreshing.

Another symptom that distresses many is a giddiness, especially when one first stands up. One must do it slowly and hold on to something to prevent falling. This hasn't appeared yet, but it will.

The actual craving for food, unless one is desperately hungry, is a product of one's too-vivid imagination. Thus, the thing to discipline while fasting (or otherwise) is the imagination. Some hungry people spend their time making out menus or picturing huge banquets. This seems about the most foolish and self-destructive thing one could do under the circumstances.

The sense that seems to be most closely related to our appetite is the sense of smell. The smell of delicious food—and to a hungry person all food appears delicious—can really send the imagination and salivary glands into a tailspin. I am practiced enough at present so that I don't expect such things to bother me, at least until the latter part of the fast. It would probably be preferable for fasters to stay a long way from any kind of food. In my case that isn't possible, but also not critically necessary.

Attended the science fair at the grade school with

my family this evening. Town is four miles away. Our youngest girl, sixth grade, had an electroscope: a gallon jug with a copper wire from the cork, and tinfoil leaves suspended inside which open when they are energized. The most primitive radiation detection device—one carried in a balloon discovered cosmic rays.

Everything reworked and typed that has been written so far. Writing is much easier than typing. Probably my bad attitude. May have to give up typing when the fast enters into more severe stages.

11:15 P.M. Will read a bit and retire. A dull overcast day and evening. A high haze, which may seem normal to people in cities, but unusual here. 42°. Hope to be able to relax more tomorrow.

Friday, March 26

8:30 A.M. A brighter day. Deep blue sky with a few high scattered clouds. Slept well, and hope to spend the day more to my liking. Weighed Wednesday: 173 with fairly heavy work clothes on—several pounds more than I ever remember weighing. Our scale may not be accurate but will continue using it. Have been eating more than I'd prefer for six months or so in hopes of laying some fat on my bones in preparation for a long fast—a couple of pounds gained, not remarkably successful. This morning weighed 170—a pound a day may be an average weight loss.

Have driven up on the side of Grand Mesa, 16 miles from home. No traffic, a dozen cars may pass all morning. Almost 10,000 feet altitude—home is 6000. Snow about two feet deep, but patchy. Stopped among the aspen. White trunks and limbs delicate and stark now. Light haze over the valley which may clear later. Good view of the broad basin below—the snow-covered San Juans and West Elks as much as a hundred miles away. Writing on a clipboard against the steering wheel, a brisk chill breeze outside. Bright bluebirds flitting nearby and perching precariously on the highest blowing twigs of oak brush.

Beginning to feel weaker. Feeding hay and other chores aren't heavy work and only take about a half

hour, but they will soon become difficult. When fasting one much prefers to rest. And rest then is much deeper than normal.

The news is civil war in Pakistan. And the Calley trial. Read an interesting article in *Saturday Review* late last night on the profound effects of Vietnam atrocities on America. Of course, the Calley trial avoids the real issues, and that may be its purpose. Those actually on trial are generals, senators, commanders-in-chief, our technology, and entire way of life. It may take years, or an eternity, but justice can never be avoided. "If a man speaks or acts from an evil thought, pain follows him as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the cart."

There is a certain sadness about fasting. A physical thing. My own thinking largely avoids the sharp distinctions that have been made sometimes between body, soul, and spirit, or physical, intellectual, and emotional factors. Yet there are these various aspects of our natures. Fasting is a sacrifice of more external elements in favor of more internal ones. But the physical aspect is also very internal and benefits profoundly from fasting, and suffers from indulgence. Apparently the unthinking and unexamined obvious surfaces of our natures touch us all the way from the crudest physical to the subtlest spiritual existence.

The part of me that is beginning to feel sad and disheartened now is the donkey that has to carry the gear. Unfortunately, it is accustomed to being in charge of the expedition. But perhaps it is possible to make the donkey obedient to the weaker master with the superior vision and knowledge—or at least imagination. He knows, or thinks he knows, where there is far better pasture and pleasanter days and nights even for the donkey. But right now there are these steep, barren,

bitterly cold passes that have to be crossed to get there.

What is the deeper significance of food? Physical, intellectual, emotional, or spiritual food? The idea that humans stoke themselves with nourishment like one stokes an engine with fuel is altogether crude, naive, and superficial. For the most part, food is a stimulant or a depressant. It is different in degree but not in kind from the other drugs people use. And its purpose, for the most part, is to hide our essential nakedness, to paper over the harsh realities, the incredible depths and the profound meanings of existence. This is the purpose of most eating.

Simple, nourishing food moderately indulged in doesn't burn us out so quickly. And we are able in some measure to recover from its worst effects. And no doubt food, along with the more severe forms of stimulation and drugging, also provides elements that subtly mold our thoughts and emotions. The simpler the food the milder the nourishment, and the less antagonistic to men's deepest need of spiritual nourishment.

1:45 P.M. Home again. Cloudy and colder. Some may wonder how the length of a fast should be determined. One can simply decide on a day's fast, or a week, as Gandhi did various times. But if a complete fast is seriously undertaken, then the most rational thing to do is to let it terminate itself.

When the eyes and tongue clear, and hunger returns with unmistakable vigor, then the fast is over and starvation begins. The process of starvation may last a long time before a person actually dies. Generally speaking, those experienced with long fasts terminate them when the readily available reserves have obviously been exhausted.

How long is that? The historical ideal is forty days, as in the experiences of Moses and Jesus. Pythagoras wouldn't accept a student who hadn't fasted forty days. Jacob Boehme, the 17th-century nature-mystic and philosopher, has a great deal to say about the inner meaning of fasting. Forty, as he points out, is used many places in scripture as a symbol of trial and testing. Forty days of the Deluge, Jacob at age forty when he left home, forty years wandering in the wilderness, Christ's forty hours in the grave, etc.

Boehme uses the figure of forty days' fasting without anywhere mentioning his own experience. I have finally come to think of this figure as being purely symbolic, and although Jesus and Moses were highly symbolic and historical figures, I have no such pretensions.

I met a man once who was in his sixty-seventh day of fasting, which is not unprecedented. Perhaps the best-known historical case of prolonged fasting was McSwiney, the Irish patriot and Lord Mayor of Cork. He went on a hunger strike to the death in 1920 in protest of British policies. One of the fasters died after sixty-eight days. Strychnine was injected into McSwiney's veins to "help" him after he refused food and alcohol. This, and the intense political pressures he was under in jail, made his situation far from ideal. When he finally died, nine fellow strikers gave up their fast after ninety-four days. They recuperated rapidly and were reported to have been healthier than before the fast. No doubt disciplined yogins have fasted much longer times. Starving is also a way many Taoists have chosen to die. But there are no known records of how long they might have lasted.

In my case, I would prefer the fast to go to the point where intense hunger symptoms appear, or possibly just a little beyond that into the severe and dangerous

period. There is no way of exactly knowing one's reserves, or how rapidly they have to be expended. Forty days may be average, and I may also be about average. Anything less than thirty days would be more or less of a dud. And over sixty days would be unexpected. So my intention is to look at sixty days but to be prepared to stop before then if circumstances indicate the fast should be broken.

My own preparations, conditions, and circumstances are far from ideal. But then, everyone's is. We all just have to work with the available material. Those who fast purely for health usually go to bed and keep warm to conserve their resources. On the other hand, few if any of such persons could be expected to have very profound inner resources on which they might draw. But my own purpose is to try to energize and draw upon certain inner resources that I have discovered—resources that many other men and women, from every time and culture, have also discovered.

Whether this attempt at interior energizing will lengthen or shorten the fast remains to be seen. It is a question that could be resolved either way. Only actual experience will tell. It may be that most people who have attempted such things have done so under the guidance of spiritually wise and experienced teachers. Since such teachers aren't readily available today, one can only proceed by trial and error, using his best instincts and intelligence. Many must have proceeded that way and been successful.

The point, according to Boehme, is to have manna—the divine essentiality, the pure element, the still liberty—to give to all of one's life-forms when they become so desperately hungry. This, of course, is always available in an unlimited supply, if one knows where to get it. The trouble, Boehme tells us, is that our various

mouths are shut up tight, and we are completely out of the habit of eating that substance. Instead, we keep stuffing ourselves with this outward world's fruit, which the serpent so skillfully, fascinatingly, and subtly presented to our mother Eve.

But if we succeed, then we do what the wise alchemists, East and West, have always tried to do. Those who have thought alchemy meant transmuting lead into gold have simply been deceived children—usually very wicked deceived children. The true gold is a living spirit. And the transmutation, if it takes place, occurs within our most alive and essential human properties.

6:55 P.M. Rested almost an hour but didn't sleep. A necessary family trip to town. Everything typed that has been written so far. More distractions expected tomorrow and Sunday than today.

Have been interested, especially during the last several months, in the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the man with the rather pretentious title who came from India to the West several years ago with transcendental meditation. He attracted some very popular show people as followers, and the movement made headlines for a while. But so far as I know it hasn't lived up to its expectation and is in eclipse now—together with some of its most popular hangers-on.

At the time it was in the news, the movement very much interested me, although I never knew more about it than appeared in magazines. But several months ago I happened on two well-used paperback books, one by him and the other about him. An extremely interesting and excellent person, certainly no fake or fraud. Many, including myself, hoped he might accomplish more than he seems to have done.

At the time, he was widely accused of a certain fault:

He was too optimistic and easygoing. And that no doubt has been his undoing. In a way, this shortcoming is latent in his philosophy. And, in a way, it probably developed from his own naive and delightfully buoyant childlike nature.

Almost thirty years ago I became interested in Taoism and Buddhism. Somewhat later I discovered the profound values of the Tantric practices, of the Sufis, and the Hasidim. But most Hinduism, like Southern Buddhism, has never been especially appealing. It seems too much like word-chopping. On the other hand, I corresponded with D. T. Suzuki even before he came to the United States, and before Zen became popular here. He seems to me to have been one of the world's wise men.

The Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's ideas probably represent some of the best aspects of Vedanta. The first part of his book is theoretical, probably learned from his teacher, and by far the best. The latter part, practical instructions, may be more his own and is less useful.

The best eastern religions certainly have great spiritual riches to offer. They provide excellent spiritual, physical, psychological, and emotional techniques and disciplines—far superior to anything ever developed by Christianity. But what Christianity has is a depth of insight into the nature of the cosmos that oriental religions, at least in their better-known forms, lack.

The Maharishi emphasizes again and again that the human mind wants above all else to go to the field of greater happiness. The question is, does it? Discipline and control are rejected, and the whole burden of human improvement is placed on transcendental meditation. But can that by itself bear all this weight? Since we are what we are, apparently it cannot. And the Ma-

harishi's great modern discovery that this alone is enough hasn't been proven by the facts.

Here is one of his examples: A dog needn't be chained to stay at his master's door.¹ No. He need only be well fed. But is that a true illustration of dog nature? Some dogs enjoy hunting in the fields no matter how well they are fed. And if a neighbor's dog comes in heat, then he had better be chained—food will be completely ineffective. The human mind doesn't always want to go to the field of greater happiness.

The Maharishi, and also Suzuki, vigorously balk at the figure of the crucifixion. And this seems to be more or less true of those who embrace oriental religions and philosophies. But the death of the God-man on the cross is the very heart of Christianity. This goes much deeper than the ideas of karma and rebirth. Not that such ideas are altogether wrong. They just aren't that profound.

What can this Gospel of Jesus be?
What Life and Immortality,

What was it that he brought to Light
That Plato & Cicero did not write?

What Jesus taught, the poet Blake goes on to tell us, was the forgiveness of sins—the fact that overthrows karma. And by his personal example he taught crucifixion and resurrection. These are profound elements of that spiritual power that creates the universe. They deny the serene and ultimate immutability of the Creator. And these deep insights could only have arisen from the hard stony hill country where Abraham sojourned, and out of the deepest anguish of the Jewish soul. They couldn't have been produced in the lush, fertile, beautiful and peaceful valleys of India.

Does God the Creator, the eternal Being on the other side of relative nature, suffer? India answered "no," but Jesus answered "yes." Does the Creator love His world? Jesus showed that the Creator loves this world infinitely. He will make, and has made, any possible sacrifice to salvage it. This means that God suffers—and far more intensely than men can possibly suffer. Does the human mind always choose to go to the field of greater happiness? One can study history or look around him—or into himself—for the answer. Because of this, God suffers.

It is by no means a coincidence that modern science and technology have arisen out of Christianity and nowhere else. Alfred North Whitehead, another wise man, saw clearly why this was true, namely, that science and technology have profound spiritual significance. It would be impossible to exaggerate the depth of this significance, but few have the wit to see that—or perhaps the courage to look at it.

"The machine," wrote Berdyaev, "leads to the breaking of the seals of history."²

The cat is out of the bag now. It will *never* be coaxed back. Humpty Dumpty has fallen, and no human ingenuity can ever mend him again. Now humanity will enter into the judgement, and every man's work will be tried by fire—the elemental nuclear fires at the root of nature. This is becoming so obvious that any perceptive person can see it. One needn't put on any religious glasses to see it. It is plain, factual, and ultimately terrifying.

But it is also possible to see this denouement of history in a better light—in fact, in a far better light, the light of the eternal love and wisdom, and the eternal purpose of man's salvation.

"Therefore, thou brave world, look at thyself," Jacob

Boehme, that great Christian visionary, wrote in 1623. "Now think what thou doest. For Babel is already in flames, and begins to burn. There is no longer any possibility of quenching, nor any remedy. She has been recognized as evil. Her kingdom goeth to the end. HALLELUJAH!"³

Saturday, March 27

Fourth day of the fast.

6:15 A.M. Starting to get steeper now. Very tired last night and didn't get to bed till after 11. Nose was stopped up slightly, and had difficulty breathing. Slept well, but awake long before daybreak. Went to sleep and woke up thinking about what I had written. Perhaps it gives a wrong impression. The Maharishi, Suzuki, and the sages of India, Tibet, and China are in fact objects of my deepest respect, people I cherish deeply as guides, friends, and fellow spirits. And if there happens to be slight differences in some points of our philosophy, I am sure these will never become obstacles between us. Then again, it is possible we don't differ that much at all.

Lay in bed a long time struggling with doubts, depression, and trying to reach that deep common ground where all such things are resolved and satisfied. Great resounding words or high-flown ideas just won't get it. One has to dive down into the depths and find his proper and necessary spiritual nourishment. I must admit that this hasn't been especially easy to come by so far during the fast. Will have to spend a lot more time at it. Words and ideas come easily, but they are also a

tax on energy and resources and may have to be cut to the bone.

Got up early, washed, shaved, and scrubbed my mouth out, which helps morale considerably. Jesus' instruction to wash and to place the most cheerful countenance on fasting was certainly perceptive. It isn't easy to describe the dark impressions that sometimes assail one. They aren't logical, rational, or intellectual. More like a tremendous weight forcing one down into the earth.

Went on a long fast about twenty years ago. It wasn't successful. At least it didn't accomplish what I had hoped. Not enough intelligence, guts, or experience on my part. In experience and understanding of the thing, I am better prepared now; but in nerve, vigor, and external circumstances, perhaps less favorably disposed. At that time, near the end of the fast, it seemed I was experiencing some of the feelings of a dying person. Perhaps I was, and perhaps that is one essential factor in fasting—to breach the gates of hell, which in fact may lead to heaven. But so few die a natural death nowadays. This is one of the great "benefits" of science and technology. After everything else it does for (to) us, it also deprives us of this last and deepest experience of reality. So we have to go out into eternity knocked out with drugs. Horrible, absolutely horrible, as I see it. But it is a benefit most people cherish and demand.

Those who are spiritually wise have always placed a deep emphasis on the rites of dying and have incorporated them into the customs and traditions of the common people. But our rites today are absolutely ignorant and atrocious. It would be hard to imagine worse. To be shot and dumped in a ditch might be better.

The time of death is above all a time of need for

deep, firm, perceptive and sympathetic guidance. And it seems obvious that all except the most completely obtuse and incompetent should realize that. "Precious unto the Lord is the death of his saints." Does that mean drugged, embalmed, laid out prettily, flowered, preached and sung mawkishly over? And all these horrors at what is many times an unsupportable expense and burden to those left. Oh death, where is thy sting? Oh grave, where is thy victory? Their sting and victory are certainly evident enough among us today.

6:55 A.M. Expect a rather difficult day today. Things to be done that I'd rather not. In ways it might be easier to do what I am trying to do in a cave high in the Himalayas, although undoubtedly men and women in those places have problems too. But I am a householder here in modern America. There are advantages as well as severe disadvantages to that position. Yet I am convinced that the creative spirit who is the eternally wise Father of us all is able to salvage any situation—*any*, even the very worst—and that this can be done wisely, graciously, beautifully, and with absolute satisfaction throughout.

So rather than finding fault with others, what is required of me right now is to put into practice the deepest of their concepts and to draw up nourishment from that eternal and immutable Being, the one Truth and Reality that lies beneath and continually supports nature—these relative, constantly changing fields of phenomena all about us of which we are ourselves a part.

8:55 A.M. The news is an estimated 10,000 unarmed people killed in East Pakistan by planes and tanks. The question that occurs to me is: Where did

such deadly instruments of destruction and repression originate? And there can be little doubt about where. They originated in the imaginations, the minds, the hearts, and the hands of good substantial folks, my fellow countrymen—who are for the most part pleasant enough people, seemingly innocent of such terrible atrocities. Many of them attend church and even consider themselves to be Christians—saved, perhaps.

But that simply won't do. And we wonder why the country is dying spiritually, and in every other way. This shallow, superficial convincing of ourselves that we are really fine people just won't get it. We are all coming into the bind now, the narrow squeeze where such folly is obvious and will be strictly eliminated from the human race.

The Maharishi told his followers that there was no need of changing their life-styles. Just meditate, that's enough. It's all right to build tanks and fighter planes and machine guns, or atom bombs—if you need the money. Or to use them—if necessary. But be sure and meditate twice a day. Obviously, the life-styles of some of his most prominent followers were extremely poor and anything but products of wisdom and righteousness.

Such gentle optimism may seem nice, but at times a more rigorous rule is necessary. And in fact he knew better: "The quality of wealth is determined by the method of earning," he states. "And wealth produced by helping people," he goes on, "produces a good influence, while wealth produced by helping society degenerate has a bad influence."⁴ But here, I hadn't noticed before, he introduces the concept of "legal and illegal," which he interprets elsewhere in a strictly establishmentarian sense. But "legal and illegal" has little or nothing to do with it. Perfectly horrendous things can be and continually are being done legally—

the very worst things possible. Are the powers of heaven and hell subject to the nations' legislatures? How stupid can we be?

On the other hand, a profound concept that he introduces concerns the important spiritual influence of food: It must be earned by righteous means or it won't nourish us spiritually. I had seen this important idea before only in Sufi thought, where it is very prominent. It may be prominent in Hindu practice also, and elsewhere, but I haven't run across it. Perhaps Gandhi taught it, and undoubtedly he did, learning it from his wise and virtuous mother. Of course, anyone with the least perception can see that this idea regarding our economy must be true. But the Sufis made it a central percept. If food is purchased with tainted money, money that hasn't been worked for or that has been obtained through unrighteous work, then it will corrupt the eater. The great Sufi saints were very particular about what they ate. An old moldy crust of bread was likely to be pure; but sumptuous feasts in luxurious surrounding were always suspect, and almost without exception spiritually lethal.

Another news item along the same line. The residents of Lyons, Kansas, were polled and found to be overwhelmingly in favor of a nuclear dump in their area. It will bring them money, they think. Good churchgoing people too, no doubt. And their spiritual leaders no less obtuse than the rest. Poison the earth with plutonium bomb wastes for 500,000 years. But what of that? The blind leading the blind. *And to think that man was designed to be a wise and powerful guide and leader of nature, to dress and keep God's garden. How far men miss their true destiny!*

But not everyone has. And a very small amount of good seed will no doubt be enough to salvage the whole

human project. And that seed has already been saved, gathered into its eternal storehouse. Perhaps not quite enough yet; but then, perhaps almost enough. The important thing is that the project not fail, and it won't. But also, it is tremendously worthwhile to be included in that seed. The fate of the rejects terrifies us so deeply that we don't care to look or speculate on that.

The world, the Hasidim know, is supported by everlasting mercy. And it is equally supported by an everlasting stern rigor. Both of these cosmic qualities are infinitely deep—deeper than any human or angelic mind can ever possibly imagine or experience. They have to be so, or all of nature would quickly dissolve.

10:20 A.M. A short but very worthwhile time of rest and meditation. Perhaps not good to write so much. But I feel impelled to it. Can be culled later at more leisure. Had expected to find it easier to meditate deeply while not eating, but so far have found it otherwise. More difficult; but also, I am sure, more necessary.

Many things have long appealed to me in eastern philosophies. But the most appealing thing has been the techniques they have developed, and the ideas surrounding these techniques. The most important seems to me to be their experience in opening the chakras. These are things which seem practically unknown in the West, with only the vaguest allusions to them in all of Christian literature. And yet it is impossible to believe they have really been unknown. There are references in Boehme, and in some of the early Desert Fathers. But Christianity has never developed a frame of reference in which to fit such experience.

Of course, every contemplative who has been accepted into second grade would have to know about

them. But no doubt they have been considered too intimate, secret, private and personal to be discussed publicly. I also had that idea once, until I discovered that they weren't secrets at all in the East. Everyone who was anyone knew them, which may have been true in the West also, but hidden.

Almost all Christian scholarship, however, has been perfectly blind to these very important matters. A good example appears in the remarkably inferior Revised Standard Translation of the Bible, where Jesus stood and cried out to the people on the last day of the great feast in the temple. The King James Version reads: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The Revised Standard scholars, no doubt supposing that it would be more meaningful, as well as polite, and not having the vaguest notion of what Jesus was talking about, have changed "belly" to "heart."

But "heart," as they use it, is merely a poetic term and certainly not the source of the living water that Jesus well understood and was referring to. Since Jesus' words were always clear and precise, his term was probably the equivalent of our "gut." That's the correct, proper, and common word locating the chakra from which living water proceeds. But of course Christian scholars know absolutely nothing of that, or of the significance of Mount Zion throughout Scripture.

We read that at one time Jesus "rejoiced in spirit," publicly expressing his profound pleasure and appreciation to his heavenly father for hiding these things from the wise and the prudent and revealing them to babes: "Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." This is an aspect of Jesus overlooked by the usual soft, sentimental, spineless interpretations. The fact is that Jesus

always had a clear perception of who were his own and who were not—where the human wheat and where the human chaff lay. And he didn't waste precious time or energy on chaff.

When he was threatened he said, "Where I am going you can't go." Now where was that? His enemies had no idea—and never will have. It isn't far away, or in some distant future. It isn't pie in the sky by and by. It's just that there are no wolves in that fold. Absolutely not. *Never*. Even if it is the most obvious thing in the world, it still remains perfectly impenetrable.

And every chakra is equally impenetrable. A proof that man is made in the image of God. Perfected, he is the perfect reflection of the divine power and wisdom. But that is still far far away from everyone. The best so far haven't even gotten a good start through grade school. But the promise is there, waiting for anyone to claim who *will*.

"Hail to the jewel in the flower of the lotus!"—On a homemade plaque on the wall in front of my writing table.

A point that might interest a reader of this journal is how I first became aware of the chakras. I was living in Chicago at the time, working in a hospital. That afternoon I had been to the main public library. For some time before this I had been interested in Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, and Ouspensky. These, especially Ouspensky's *Tertium Organum*, had produced something of a revolution in the way I looked at the world, which until then I had presumed had three dimensions.

At the library that day I had been looking at Ouspensky's *After Materialism What?* In it he makes a passing reference to Jacob Boehme, a name I had never heard before. In the card catalogue I found that the library had one of Boehme's books, *The Signature of All*

Things. I checked it out and began reading it on the El, which was crowded with evening rush-hour passengers reading newspapers.

Like many others before me, I found that Boehme's ideas threw me into a perfect sweat. I had never encountered anything like this before. It was speaking very powerfully to me—but I wasn't sure at all what it was saying.

When I got home I turned to the back and began reading in the shorter dialogues. Before long I reached the place where the student says to the teacher, "Sir, how can I hear the unspeakable words of God?" And the reply is, "My son, when you are able to cast yourself into *That* in which no creature dwelleth, even if it is only for a moment, you will hear the unspeakable words of God."

There! That was it! That was the point I had always been missing. I was lying on the bed reading. Laying down the book, I immediately dropped into *That* immeasurable abyss in which, as Boehme said, no creature dwelleth. It resembled a free fall through space.

I knew immediately and instinctively that what I was experiencing was something tremendously important. And I took infinite pains not to lose that subtle connection; at every opportunity, morning, noon, and night, I labored to maintain it. I kept this up for years, and in fact still do.

Just what this opening signified I didn't actually know. It was some years later, when I came across *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, that I learned of eastern techniques for opening the chakras, and how to open the others successively through meditation. Later, I also learned of the emphasis Hindu and Tibetan yogis place on the chakras. Their methods and results are for the

most part secret. But the instructions and explanations given in *The Secret of the Golden Flower* and the *Hui Ming Ching* are plain enough to those who seriously attempt to understand and follow them.

These ancient Chinese texts use the figure of "circulating the light." This is only one of a number of figures that might be used, but it is an excellent one. The thing to remember, we are told, is that the light circulates of itself—if only we don't prevent it. The way is to become perfectly calm in the center of our minds, discovering that center and having no thoughts either for or against it.

"The Heavenly Heart [primary head chakra] is the germinal root of the Great Meaning. If a man can be absolutely quiet then the Heavenly Heart will manifest itself.

"Therefore you only have to make the Light circulate. That is the deepest and most wonderful secret. The Light is easy to move, but difficult to fix. If it is allowed to go long enough in a circle, than it crystalizes itself. That is the natural spirit-body. This crystalized spirit is formed beyond the Nine Heavens. It is the condition of which it is said, 'Silently in the morning you fly upward.' "

The point is, first, to learn to meditate correctly, and second, to practice regularly and diligently. This opens the chakras and leads, its practitioners believe, to all kinds of unknown and unexpected benefits.

"If you would complete the diamond body with no outflowing,

Diligently heat the roots of consciousness and life.

Kindle light in the blessed country ever close at hand,

And there hidden, let your true self always dwell."⁵

10:15 P.M. A long day, and tired. The mind remains clear while fasting, and the senses sharp. But the muscles become weak and weary. This is especially true of my legs. It feels very delicious to lie down and stretch them out. Almost no giddiness yet. The fact is, I am probably expending energy too rapidly for a really long fast.

Rested twice for less than an hour, but didn't sleep. Otherwise have been busy since before 6 A.M. Everything moving along well. Have reworked and typed all that has been written so far. Looks like something over 1500 words per day, besides other work that has had to be done. Will have to slow down.

One of the boys and I dressed out our last sheep this afternoon. A tiring job that took several hours; not particularly pleasant, but necessary. A huge buck, several years old; must have weighed at least 250 pounds, probably more. Big curling sharp horns, somewhat dangerous, cutting up some of the other stock. Not bad-tempered; just exuberant, and strong. But someone could be hurt unexpectedly. Sheepmen never turn their backs on bucks, which can really stretch one out flat and do considerable damage. And they seldom keep one with horns. All of our sheep have been large, and he was the largest we had ever raised.

We shot him in the barnyard and hoisted him with the tractor lift to dress him out in the barn. And after being idle most of the winter, the Ford needed some repairs: tire pumped and battery charged, etc. For the family's meat requirements we usually dress a half-grown goat, or perhaps a lamb, which is much easier to handle. This buck was very fat—about 150 pounds of meat. Some of it will be canned for future use. And the fat will be rendered for soap. The fleece was too heavy for me to want to handle by myself and is now nailed

to the side of the barn. Perhaps it will become another meditation mat. One already in use. Yogins sometimes use tiger skins, or deer, or antelope. But some also use sheepskins. A sheepskin suits me—we have them, and no tigers.

A question may arise about butchering, or about meat eating. But if one is to eat meat, then butchering the animal yourself seems preferable to forcing someone else to do it for you. We have many vegetarian friends but have never been convinced that such a regimen is best for us. And we have seen no proof that strict vegetarians are better off mentally, morally, or spiritually than moderate meat eaters. And we eat meat moderately—once a day or less, and mostly what we have raised ourselves.

There are two points in particular, it seems to us, that vegetarians fail to see. First, meat consumption is a service to the animal. For example, all the livestock on our place is alive because we take care of it, because it is useful to us. Otherwise they wouldn't be alive. We have raised sheep, which takes considerable effort and skill. Now no more will be born here. They simply won't exist. Yet apparently sheep, and particularly lambs, enjoy their existence. Is it better to live and be supplied with food, water, shelter, etc., for a year or several years, and then to die quickly? Or is it better never to have lived? From the point of view of the animal, it would seem that the former is preferable.

The second point is that the primary reason for keeping livestock is because they can produce food and other necessities on land that couldn't otherwise be productive, and where it would otherwise be impossible for men to live. Tomatos and fruit trees only grow in select spots, and not everyone can live in the world's select spots. But most of the planet is covered with

water, or deserts, or mountains, or tundra. Places that can support little or no edible vegetable life can often with (or without) man's assistance support excellent animal life. Is vegetable life superior to animal life? We don't think so.

Generally speaking, vegetarians must live on the most fertile lands and in the lush easy climates—a balmy island, or India, or Florida, or California. Or else they have to depend for support on the products of such places. Meat eaters tend to live in the harsh stony lands. And the harsher the land, the more this becomes apparent. No doubt Eskimos love and place a high value on fruit and vegetables; but, at least while they were free and independent, these have been almost completely unavailable to them.

The Sodomites, in their lush, fertile, well-watered valley, could perhaps afford to be vegetarians. But Abraham, wandering out on the dry stony hills, could not. We happen to prefer the rough land, the high wild mountains, the harsh distant deserts, the rocks and the snow—along with the measure of independence that enhances such harsh places. Also, we have in some measure been forced and crowded out into these relatively empty sub-marginal lands. So our economy (and philosophy) accommodates itself to that. And we believe it can.

11:40 P.M. A black cloudy night. Light breeze off the mountains. 44°. Weary, and to bed.

Sunday, March 28

9:05 A.M. Slept well, very refreshed. Awoke early, perhaps four. Lay abed an hour or two thinking and meditating, then dozed off again and didn't get up till seven, which is late around here. Chores are becoming more difficult; weaker, but no giddiness. Quartered the meat and hung it in our outside cellar—about 20' by 20' underground, with several feet of dirt overhead. They are fairly common here in this dry country—warm in winter and cool in summer, excellent for food storage.

Shaved, showered, shampooed, and put on fresh clothing—worthwhile conveniences that my friends who have fasted out in some distant cave couldn't have had. Weighed in at 166 this morning, dressed as before. Fresh haircut by the barber in the family—my wife. I tell the kids I don't care how my hair is cut just so it's beautiful. But they think that's disgustingly impossible. Bald in the middle, and the rest sticks straight up, Ben Gurion fashion. The style I'd prefer would be shaved smooth on top with a full beard. Had cultivated a smooth heavy beard, but it wasn't comfortable. Also, my pate isn't neat and smooth. This preferred style might be distinctive, but probably neither comfortable nor convenient. May try it sometime.

We usually attend church Sunday mornings, but other things, including a slight cold in the family, prevented it.

Excellent adult Sunday School class, taught by the local M.D., an old friend, excellent fellow, and intelligent—even if he does give folks pills. We have intense and candid discussions in class. Too intense and candid for the average taste.

Haven't had a bowel movement since Wednesday. But have never had one during a fast of any duration, although others' experiences have been different. But this doesn't concern me at all. Normally, this is a quite simple and untroubled function. And one of the most obvious physical things that correct meditation does is to assist elimination. The Being one reaches wisely and effectively labors to eliminate all kinds of poisons and refuse from one's body, mind, and spirit. At least, this has become very apparent to me.

Normally read a great deal but have had little opportunity the last several days. Picked up Gandhi's *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*⁸ this morning. An excellent thing by a wise and candid man who had many interesting and enlightening experiences. Wanted to read again of his fasting experiences, but became involved in other parts no less interesting.

He considered himself to be a naturally heavy eater. Without restraints, he would have "descended lower than the beasts and met my doom long ago." A sentiment I share equally for myself.

An early observation that is almost universally overlooked was this: "It dawned upon me that fasting could be made as powerful a weapon of indulgence as of restraint. Many similar later experiences of mine as well as of others can be adduced as evidence of this startling fact."

But his motivation and mine are somewhat different. His desire was to give up all relish for food, while mine

certainly is not. Of course, fasting or diet restriction does tremendously increase one's relish for food. As far as I can see, this is a big advantage, one that intemperate people can never discover or enjoy. "Hunger is the best cook," says the old German proverb. A crust of bread is more delicious to a hungry man than the most expensive banquet to those who are stuffed. Those who never fast can never know the really superb and excellent taste of even the very simplest foods.

Then Gandhi tells of his wife's courage. She was in much pain, severely emaciated, and near death following an operation that had been considered necessary. Gandhi was in another town. Since the Gandhis never allowed themselves wine or meat, the British doctor, a close friend, was thrown into a great dilemma. How can the sick possibly recover without such things?! So he called, asking for permission to give her beef tea. Beef tea! Ah, that's what one needs while lying at death's door—especially if he happens to be a strict Hindu. Actually, that is very mild compared with the exotic chemicals the dying are thought to need today, preferably injected directly into their bloodstreams.

When Gandhi arrived, the doctor informed him that Mrs. Gandhi had already been given beef tea—which the family considered to be highly unethical. After all, the doctor didn't want this close friend to die under his care. But after discussing the matter, Gandhi and his sons decided they could consent only if Mrs. Gandhi herself consented. She was in a very serious condition, almost dead; nevertheless, her husband spoke to her about the painful decision that had to be made. But there wasn't the least doubt in her mind. "I will not take beef tea. It is a rare thing in this world to be born as a human being, and I would far rather die in your arms than pollute my body with such abominations."

The family pleaded with her, citing allowances in Hindu scriptures and mentioning Hindu friends with no scruples about using meat as a medicine. Being illiterate, she couldn't read scriptures. But she knew her family's tradition. "She was adamant. 'No,' she said, 'pray remove me at once.' "

The doctor went into a rage. He hadn't expected that, and he berated Gandhi viciously. She would probably die even before reaching the train. But he couldn't be responsible for her death, which would occur immediately without beef tea.

It was drizzling at the time, and the station was some distance away. Then after the train ride there was an additional two and a half miles to their residence. Fortified with a bottle of hot water and another of hot milk, she was taken in a rickshaw to the station, her husband carrying her into the train in his arms. She was nothing but skin and bones, having taken no nourishment for days.

The trip was completed. Then the dutiful and sympathetic Swami arrived. He pleaded with them and cited all kinds of scriptures. "But Kasturbai put an end to the dialogue at once. 'Swamiji,' she said, 'whatever you may say, I do not want to recover by means of beef tea. Pray don't worry me any more. You may discuss the thing with my husband and children if you like. But my mind is made up.' "

Of course she recovered—but not immediately. Gandhi had various simple home remedies, but all of them failed to restore her to health. So he asked her to give up salt and pulses (beans, peas, and lentils), no doubt important items in their vegetarian diet. She refused. So then he said he would give them up for one year whether she did or not. So she did. And strange to say, she then regained her health very quickly.

Gandhi wondered whether it was from the diet itself or from the psychological factors surrounding it.

For some reason, largely unknown, yogins and mystics have often condemned pulses. Pythagoras absolutely banned their use. Of course, they are hard to digest, and probably for that reason are considered to be inferior foods. (The very best food grows on trees.) Apparently, the pulses' unique combination of starch and protein make them famous, or infamous, as creators of intestinal gas.

But another little-known fact is that deep meditation also many times produces gas, and this becomes obvious to those who practice it. This idea may be doubted, or even scorned. Nevertheless it is a fact. Intestinal gas seems to me to be one aspect of the deep and vitally important processes of elimination—the very simplest, most immediate, and most gentle aspect of it. (Please don't anyone turn off the bubble machine.) And this process advises us quickly and obviously as to the quality and effects of the substances we eat—in which case pulses fall near the bottom of the list.

Monday, March 29

3:30 A.M. Went to Delta yesterday afternoon for a speech contest our high-school boy was in. About twenty miles away; 5,000 population. Then company afterwards until late evening. To bed shortly after 10:30. My experience is that fasting affords deep sleep, but not very long, and sometimes not easy to come by.

On the other hand, I have also heard that insomniacs, or those addicted to medicating themselves into unconsciousness, sometimes spend the major part of a fast asleep—which wouldn't seem too hard to take. A prison saying is that when you're asleep the warden does your time. And old jailbirds can be recognized by the fact that as soon as they're locked up they look for a good place to sleep.

Temperature has fallen sharply during the night—26° now. Water in the tractor, but there had seemed to be no immediate need of draining it. So had to go out and do it. Heated the radiator with a torch; probably no harm done.

Before the fast I had been curious about its precise effects on sexual activity. The books say fasting renders humans sterile and impotent. Of course, this isn't true among many animals. For example, walruses fast all during rutting season—when they have more important things to attend to than mere eating. Also some insects,

during the bright, beautiful, carefree sexual aspects of their existence, don't even have any apparatus for eating.

But I must report that in human beings fasting severely depresses, and perhaps after a week or so completely eliminates, sexual activity. Desire fails—but apparently not for at least a week. I had serious questions about such an experience, since sexual activity, especially if it has the slightest illicit overtone, is severely exhausting and enervating—perhaps not immediately, but in the long run. The successful faster or spiritual aspirant has very different things on his mind. And strange to say, after what would be commonly considered a successful experience, thoughts of emasculation arose in my mind. Not harshly, but quite perceptibly. Omens possibly. Don't ever remember such things before. My interpretation is henceforth to avoid mixing such diverse activities.

The deep meanings of sex have long intrigued me. Sex, like science and technology, has profound meanings—too deep for the human mind to ever plumb. Some traditions believe that an absolute ban on sexual activity is needed for successful contemplatives. Other traditions take different views. Perhaps human beings differ as greatly on this as on other points. In any case all traditions demand sexual discipline and self-restraint in some form or other.

Gandhi, coming from a tradition that exalts complete abstinence, had a great deal of trouble with sex, and finally became completely celibate, although married. But even in traditions such as these, some of the wisest saints have been householders; Vimalakirti, and Marpa the Translator, Milarepa's great teacher. Many, if not most, of the great Sufi saints and mystics were married. And Jacob Boehme, my chief mentor, had a large

family. All the Jewish patriarchs and prophets, almost without exception, were family men. This aspect of their lives was not only important but in fact spiritually crucial. In that tradition, those who weren't successful householders were hardly thought to amount to much at all.

So historical experience doesn't afford any one simple answer. Individuals, together with their needs, differ widely. The simplest and safest course, for the most part, might be to try to stay within one's own tradition. It is spiritually dangerous to reject or deny one's own roots—the wisdom and experience of the forefathers, of which one is necessarily a product.

When asked about sexual activity, Gurdjieff, a married man whose ideas may have come largely from Sufi sources, gave, as usual, an ambiguous reply: There are times when sexual activity is constructive, and there are other times when it is destructive. Much of my own philosophy on this point comes from a couple of Taoist texts, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, and the *Hui Ming Ching*. Both texts seem to have been written by and for householders. And they explain how the most subtle alchemy of life consists in reversing the flow of the seed water. When it instinctively flows outward, it creates children. But if it is reversed in the wise and proper manner, it creates gold—the golden immortal body.

Unfortunately, in our present western civilization this innermost sacred stream of human life seldom if ever produces golden bodies. For the most part, it doesn't even produce children. It sells automobiles and deodorants and produces only the most ephemeral titillations, as well as printed paper money. In such unfortunate cases, our Taoist texts tell us, one's spirit at

death descends out through the lower openings of the body and becomes a hungry ghost.

The sexual activities so obvious everywhere today are certainly amazing. And no doubt their significance is altogether different than is often imagined. Such obvious sexuality doesn't mean that men and women are living more fully and vigorously in this particular area of animal activity. It means quite the opposite—that our society is almost exhausted and requires all this stimulation merely to keep up appearances. In sexual vigor (or pleasure or satisfaction), moderns can't hold a candle to, say, the Puritans. They were alive in this respect, and we are almost dead. That's the difference. Our present sexual convulsions aren't symptoms of health and vigor.

Just why all these strange aberrations should appear now is a deep question. The same symptoms have also appeared in other dying cultures, and among species on the verge of extinction. One factor in this may be the pollutants we knowingly or unknowingly breathe, or drink in our water, or include in our diets. Another factor is without doubt the unfortunate tendency of our technological economy to crowd people into large urban areas, while the rural areas are becoming depopulated. Rabbits, rats, mice, and other experimental animals, when forced into similarly crowded environments, display remarkably similar aberrations.

5:05 A.M. Had better rest a bit now. First signs of the dawn.

12:50 P.M. A bright beautiful spring day, the sky a deep blue. Got a load of coal in the truck from the mine, about ten miles away. Changed a tire on the car, and rendered part of the buck's tallow—might make

twenty pounds of soap so far. The dog, cats, and chickens having a feast of leftovers. Nothing at all wasted. Flooded with milk and eggs these days, but we supply others. Several neighbors, old folks, do better on goat's milk. And the eggs would bring a premium among the health-conscious. Our chickens run out, and the eggs are fertile with dark rich yolks. Impossible to buy in cities, and often even in the country.

Doing well but rather tired. The disagreeable mouth is one of the worst symptoms. Also a vague nameless doubt and nervous depression, the continual covering over of which is probably a primary reason for people's indulgence in food and drink. Perhaps my symptoms are similar to going off cigarettes. It would be quite easy to allow such things to magnify themselves—physical doubts, mental doubts, apprehensions, a real sharp financial bind. Universal human shortcomings that must be met and, hopefully, overcome.

There are various ideas about how fasts should be conducted. Many use a little lemon or lime juice in their drinking water. I believe Gandhi did that. It probably helps overcome the bad mouth. And it is supposed to counteract the acidity that inevitably develops. My doctor friend has advised it for that reason—but just from theory, not experience, or even medical lore. On the other hand, the acidity suppresses appetite, he says. What to do? Maybe another pill or shot for that also. Surely *some* medication would help no matter what the circumstances! Of course that only amuses me. But when it's applied seriously I'm not amused.

Some people also employ enemas regularly when they fast. Gandhi did that too. But the best authorities I know reject them as unnecessary and enervating, which I also believe. We can be sure neither Moses nor Jesus nor any anchorite ever used such contrivances.

The issue seems to be whether or not fasting is a natural and normal function and technique. My view is that it is natural and normal, and that our bodies naturally have everything necessary to meet and overcome any problem or difficulty that might arise. Or maybe those problems and difficulties exist primarily in our own misconceptions. I myself am convinced of the profound wisdom of nature, our bodies, and our innermost spirits. We tinker at our peril. If animals, fish, and insects can fast without difficulties, surely some humans should be able to.

There is also a question of how much water to drink. Some fasters attempt a severe temperance; others go for the flushing-out theory. But again, it seems to me, the best authorities say go according to thirst and desire, which is what I do. This usually amounts to a couple of mouthfuls every hour or so, with a bottle of water always handy. Gandhi attributed some difficulties he and his friends had during fasting to a failure to drink enough water.

The enemas are probably designed to avoid the severe bowel movement that sometimes accompanies the breaking of the fast. The first time amazed me with its altogether unexpected severity. It seemed impossible. I really didn't think it would kill me, but it certainly made me sweat, and it left me weak and trembling like a leaf for hours. Similar to childbirth, perhaps.

But since then I have learned that several small unmedicated cocoa butter suppositories help to overcome that very painful hazard.

10:40 P.M. Went with the family up on Smith hill—a long, high ridge east of Delta—late this afternoon. It is about sixteen miles from here—back roads, dirt—rough, steep and rocky the last mile or so. The

others had a little picnic supper around the campfire while I watched the sun set out of a cloudless sky. "Boy!" our youngest girl said, "I'll bet lots of people have never seen so much empty space." Miles of dry, open, uninhabited desert can be seen from that vantage point. It's close, easy to get to, and we go there often.

Returned before eight and slept an hour. Began reading a book on fasting. Quality of the ideas quite uneven. Perfectly clear night. 37°. Brilliant stars, and the moon bright and thin. "The new moon with the old moon in her arms." But long set now.

11:30 P.M. Startled out of some delightfully amusing thoughts on the book about fasting. A sharp unfamiliar barking, which I seem to have heard before, coming from the barnyard. Jumped up and hurried out with the shotgun and a pocket full of shells. The stock were up and nervous, but from nothing I could locate. The billy we have now is hornless for our protection. If he had some sharp horns he'd give any dog a good run for its money.

Tuesday, March 30

Seventh day of the fast.

8:00 A.M. To bed about midnight and up before seven. Another clear, beautiful day, 32°. Slept well and refreshed. Weighed 164. Feeling good; physical rest, sitting or lying down, is becoming increasingly pleasant.

A most disagreeable symptom is the bad mouth. Have to clear my mouth and throat often. The discharge is only slightly from the sinuses. The worst part is from the salivary glands, which at times seem to pour out a steady stream of secretion. Have provided myself with a pocket-sized spice bottle in which to expectorate when other facilities aren't handy.

The discharge seems to be about an ounce an hour, but not steadily—a grey substance, with a vile and nauseating smell. My salivary glands must be acting as important organs of elimination. If Adam wants back into the garden, he'll have to vomit that formerly delicious fruit back up bit by bit. Unpleasant and painful for him to have to do that.

The thermocouple just snapped off on the heater in the camper which has been my den for a while. The bottle of propane was low, and now I'll need a new one. It will last the rest of the spring.

The major process of elimination now is urination.

Whenever I have fasted, this process seems to speed up, and bowel movements stop completely. But others I've talked with haven't had the same experience. The urine becomes darker and heavier as the fast proceeds.

It has been almost a week now since I stopped eating. But I've fasted for a week a number of times, perhaps six or more. And always I have kept working steadily, which tends to become difficult. In my one long fast, something over five weeks, I remember that this same sort of oral elimination became extremely nauseating towards the end. And my palate usually becomes quite tender, another symptom others haven't noticed. But no indication of that at the moment.

2:45 P.M. Have driven up on Grand Mesa, about twenty miles. Bright, warm day, the sky a deep blue and the snow dazzling beneath the dark-green spruce. Snow melting fast, with water running, especially at the lower elevations. Highway dry and open, almost no traffic. Snowbanks eight feet high along both sides of the road on top, maybe four feet of snow on the level. Stopped overlooking the wide valley of the Colorado River. Stretched out in the seat and had dozed off almost an hour when a friend driving by stopped to see if I needed help.

Been reading a little book on fasting that I picked up a year or so ago. The subject is more interesting to me than the treatment. By a German now in California, but the flavor of his thought is still distinctively German. The style and treatment could be called Dense Dogmatik—similar to the stuff so dear to the hearts of modern theologians. And that probably accounts for the German preeminence in that field. No other language could make such foolishness appear rational.

His style reminds me of listening to one of Hitler's

speeches when I was a boy. I didn't know a single word of German then, but it wasn't necessary. The tone of the delivery was the essence of it, not any presumed intellectual content. Yet I am afraid my teacher, Jacob Boehme, is generally accused of being the father and best example of such verbal bombast and pomposity. "Fustian without parallel" was John Wesley's evaluation of Boehme's writing. But he was wrong. Not true. Although Boehme uses the same long, involved, convoluted sentences bristling with dangling and uncertain pronouns and modifiers, he was trying to say something definite while stumbling over the verbal obstacles that must in some way be inherent in the genius of that language.

But many Germans have thought and written clearly and beautifully. For example, Schopenhauer—as lucid as anyone could possibly be. But the proper spirit can overcome any obstacle or deformity. In fact, such obstacles may be ladders to the very highest eminences of clarity and perception. One thinks of Chuang Tzu, reputed to be one of the best Chinese writers who ever lived. Even those who execrated his ideas had to read his delightfully perceptive stories. Chuang Tzu happens to have been the first far-easterner whose ideas really shook me.

The chief heroes of his imaginative illustrations were all sorts of rejects, socially useless and repulsive individuals and materials—absolutely worthless old trees and gourds, mud, manure, old men who ridiculed philosophers and nobility and sang silly dittys at funerals, butchers, criminals whose missing limbs testified to their crimes, horribly deformed persons whose bodies illustrated evil deeds in past incarnations. These were his wise men and supreme heroes. One brilliant, cutting, and humorous essay is entitled "Deformities,

or the Evidences of a Full Character." And his blundering fall guy, the lost soul, the butt of his keenest cuts and humor was no less than the revered Confucius, that Ultimate Square.

A similar theme is evident in Jesus' thinking. His heroes were Mary, the infamous Woman of Magdella; Matthew, the tax bandit; and the despised outcast, the Good Samaritan. And the objects of his sharpest, most penetrating scorn were no less than the Best People.

But back to that book on fasting.⁷ The author's point seems to be that mucus and mucus-forming foods are the world's primary evil, possibly equaling original sin. "Perhaps this 'corpse-mucus' is even the cause of the paleness of the white race! Paleface! Corpse-color!"

At last the final truth of life has been discovered: "... the specter 'disease' has finally been deprived of its demonic mask. Even the dream of lasting youth and beauty is now about to become true." War to the death declared on the great demon Mucus!

Something in the style of his thought seems to carry him quite away: "The animal, and especially the human organism, is, from a mechanical standpoint, a complicated tube-system of blood vessels with air-gas impetus by means of the lungs in which the blood-fluid is constantly kept moving and regulated by the heart as a valve. The decomposition of the air-gas is accomplished by each breath in the lungs (separating of the air into oxygen and nitrogen): thus the blood is constantly kept moving and the human body does its service incredibly long without fatigue." Etc., etc. And then there is the clinching argument and illustration: "I have done in fasting the most significant thing in centuries: 49 days, world record." (!!) I only hope no reader supposes that I too have some sort of record in mind—either worldly or otherworldly.

It was in the middle of such delightful bombast that I was called out for a bit of dog hunting. Had been reminiscing about an incident that took place several presidential elections ago, when our oldest girl was in grade school. Everyone was supposed to make a nominating speech. Since she was at a loss, I quickly wrote up a little thing for her. Pure noise, at least 100 percent hot air—full of sound and fury signifying absolutely nothing. And the thing was a tremendous hit! The principal even had her go around and give it to the other classes. So I know by experience that many people are completely overawed by such perfectly empty stuff, if only it is delivered with a full head of superheated steam. Maybe I could write speeches for a prominent politician—one in particular.

But actually, the man makes a lot of excellent points. It isn't all that bad. He does see many of the values and virtues of fasting. And I'll have to finish his book.

4:15 P.M. Beautiful afternoon. A breeze rising. Watching birds flying overhead. A couple of ducks, and a big hawk far away. Perhaps an eagle. Better be turning slowly homeward. Will climb around in the snowbanks a bit first.

10:10 P.M. Approaching the second week. Getting away from the gate now and on out into the long stretch. Had to attend a band concert at the school this evening that one of the kids was in. My emotions are more easily stirred now—for example, by music. Been writing lots of words and getting everything else done around the place that needs to be done. The fast is moving along fairly easily. But it isn't an endurance contest of any kind. Will have to spend more time and energy bringing up solid spiritual nourishment. Intend to put

more effort into doing that—which is the only thing, as I see it, that can make this or any other human activity really worthwhile.

Haven't worn long underwear since I was a boy, but will try some, and also socks, so as to keep warmer in bed.

Wednesday, March 31

7:40 A.M. Another bright beautiful day, 38°. Slept well. Moving along smoothly and lightly, a feeling every faster well knows. Not much expendable energy, but not much needed either.

Coming down from the mountain yesterday afternoon, I was struck with a technique that shouldn't be overlooked, and began singing to myself. There is no denying the fact that fasting calls up dark foreboding impressions out of the unknown and suppressed depths. And music is an excellent means of exorcising such things. My own singing is purely for private inspiration and entertainment and is done alone, driving in a car or far out in the desert or mountains. The songs I know and that appeal to me are old—Wesley, Cowper, Fanny Crosby, etc. From the Moody era and earlier. Things I learned in childhood and heard my grandmother sing.

But best of all, and with the purest music, words, and depth of feeling and meaning, are the Negro spirituals. If only one type of song had to be chosen, it would be these. They speak perfectly to every subtle play of sunshine or shadow on my condition. Hasn't America produced saints? Who wrote these then? Surely someone did, some saints of first rank.

"The best saints," commented Swedenborg, who purported to get his information straight from the world

beyond, "come from Africa."⁸ Many of them were brought here chained like animals, no doubt. But surely America, along with feeling the effects of that terrible crime, has been enriched by their spiritual presence. Who were those great saints? No one knows, and they themselves couldn't care less. Virtue is its own reward now and forever. That reward they saw and attained—the great painful labor all behind them now. And from reports of missionaries it seems that many in Africa still have perceptions far deeper than those who attempt to enlighten them.

My apparent anti-German prejudice may need correcting. My chief mentor is a German, and many of my wife's relatives are German Baptists—fine, solid folks. They, along with many other Americans, are the children of those who at great personal sacrifice escaped from beneath the heel of Prussian militarism and conscription.

3:25 P.M. Just awoke from a pleasant period of rest and meditation—about two hours. Very windy this afternoon—gusts maybe reaching fifty mph. This happens sometimes in the spring here. During the rest of the year it is usually quite calm, the wind seldom or never blowing during the winter.

Got small bottles of reconstituted lemon and lime juice to try out as mouth wash. Mixed a little four-to-one—too strong, brought tears to my eyes. Eight-to-one or less is better. I take a sip, roll it around in my mouth, and spit it out. Perhaps it will improve the continual bad taste—just an experiment, which may or may not be worthwhile. Have noticed a little blood in my sputum occasionally. On closer observation, it seems to be draining from the sinuses.

Spent most of the morning with a small group which

was meeting with a couple of fellows from Denver traveling for the American Friends Service Committee. They were part of the planeload of men and women from all over the United States that went to Paris to speak to the various delegates at the peace talks. Very interesting and instructive. They were quite pleased with our relatively isolated area, since the people and organizations here seemed more open to a variety of ideas than they had found in urban areas. Meetings were arranged for them in various clubs, churches, on radio, TV, etc. There were also some meetings in public schools, which had always been found impossible (too controversial) in Denver and other cities.

One woman just returned from Omaha had visited a large high school there, where one of her daughters is a student. The place, she said, was run just like a prison. And that seems also to be the finding of studies made elsewhere in the country. What a shame for the children, and for all of us, that this must be so—and it may become worse as our technological cheese becomes more and more binding.

Since I've had unusual difficulty meditating properly, I've begun reading the text that has in the past helped me most along this line, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*. And it is also helping me now. A strange and difficult work, but infinitely valuable. At least, I have found it so—others may not.

The available English translation comes with voluminous notes, forewords, translators' preface, and a commentary by C. G. Jung which is quite a bit longer than the Chinese text.⁹ All this calls to mind the words of the great Swedish preacher and revivalist, David Petander: "Read the bible. Read it without commentaries." He walked across the country speaking

everywhere, even in Upsala, his home university, in working clothes. And when he addressed a crowd in a large Stockholm church following a sermon by a noted scholar and clergyman, he said: "I hope you don't think *that* was Christianity."¹⁰

So all these glosses on our ancient Chinese text are very interesting—so long as no one gets the idea that they have anything to do with the subject of the thing itself. There is also a Chinese running commentary that goes along with the original. It is thought to have originated in the seventeenth or eighteenth century. The difference here is that the unknown author *did* very profoundly understand the subject, and so his commentary is no less important or enlightening than the text he was commenting on.

But since Jung was a very intelligent person, his essay is also worthwhile—not for its illustration of the Chinese text, of course, since his purpose seems to be to obscure that, but rather as a commentary on himself and on the kind of western mind-set he represents.

"The relation of the West to Eastern thought is a highly paradoxical and confusing one. On the one side, as Jung points out, the East creeps in among us by the back door of the unconscious, and strongly influences us in perverted forms, and on the other we repel it with violent prejudice as concerned with a fine-spun metaphysics that is poisonous to the scientific mind" (from the translator's preface).

In other words, eastern ideas either poison our pure scientific mind, or else they secretly influence our unconscious in perverted forms. That would seem to be a somewhat left-handed recommendation. Jung's idea is that there is only one safe foundation for the western mind, namely, science and the scientific method. One

can never turn from that without destroying his soul. But probably the worst thing one can do is to try to take over yoga practices literally. That would be "a self-betrayal to strange and unclean gods, a cowardly trick for the purpose of usurping psychic superiority, everything in fact which is profoundly contrary to the meaning of Chinese 'method.'" No, the best that westerners can ever hope to do is to look at yoga through someone's psychoanalytic glasses.

But then he goes on with the truth of the matter. "We should do well to confess at once, that, fundamentally speaking, we do not understand the utter unworldliness of a text like this, indeed, that we do not want to understand it."

However, the fact is that the western mind is by no means monolithic. And this ancient text didn't speak exclusively to the unique Chinese soul. It spoke only to certain elements in it; to many other elements it was farther away than the moon. The same is true of Americans. The great rationalistic, skeptical, and scientific tradition has indeed been dominant in the West. It has enjoyed and usurped the power, the money, and the voice of the elite. And it has mined a remarkably rich stratum of human consciousness and endeavor. But there is also reason to believe that this fabulously rich vein is beginning to play out. And the other traditions haven't been completely forgotten.

I and millions of other Americans weren't raised in that rationalistic, skeptical, scientific tradition that Jung assumes is the only safe foundation of the western mind. In the tradition that nourished me, the great heroes without exception were Jews; Jesus, the apostles, the prophets and the patriarchs—all orientals. Greece, if it was known at all, was merely the home of the vain

philosophers. And Rome was the great whore that sits on seven hills corrupting the whole earth.

This is the traditional background of many Americans, perhaps even a majority. True, it has shortcomings, which I realize only too well. But it also has great strength, which cannot be overlooked. My parents and grandparents lived their lives in wild western towns—Leadville, Gold Hill, Tenopa, Butte, and others. The majority of people in those places shared a similar biblical background. This is true of almost all the people who produced the basic mineral and agricultural wealth on which America has been built—of most of the workers generally. The killers and hell-raisers, so famous now, died early. They either eliminated themselves or were strung up, run off, or done in by the enraged citizenry. An old man, dead now, who had lived from boyhood on the frontier, and close to the Indians, told me after watching a Western on TV that there had been nothing like that where he had been. Almost entirely fantastic. He had known of nothing like that.

So we might do well to be less bamboozled by many of the loud voices that constantly assail our ears and intellects. Perhaps they are distributing an altogether distorted view of reality. The old saying is that “money talks,” and the loudest, sweetest, and most persuasive siren voices usually belong to the hucksters.

So much for the commentaries. What we really want to do is address ourselves deeply and fundamentally to the meat and substance of this Chinese book of wisdom, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*.

10:30 P.M. A clear cold night, 24°. Perfectly calm. The moon and stars sharp and brilliant. Have been and am now listening to a Latin cantata for male trio by

Dietrich Buxtehude, *Aperite Mihi Portas Justitiae*, taken from the 118th psalm—a very profound and beautiful thing:

Open to me the gates of righteousness,
and I will go into them,
praising the Lord.

Open to me this gate of the Lord
into which the righteous enter.

This is the day that the Lord has made,
let us be glad and rejoice in it.

Save me now, I pray, O Lord,
Lord, prosper us now.

Blessed is he that cometh
in the name of the Lord.

It would be hard to follow the course of this fast, to get the meaning of it, without understanding something about the practice of meditation. And it would be difficult to appreciate the technique of meditation without having some sort of long-range view of man and his experience into which that practice and technique can be fitted.

There are many ideas about what a man really is. Each differing thought has some measure of truth as well as error. My view is that the ultimate truth is too deep ever to be known precisely. Men can only create theories that work more or less successfully. On the other hand, the success or failure of our theories may also crucially determine our destiny, so one is obliged to be as truthful and intelligent as he can. Our lives for it.

The most satisfactory illustration I know of how a

human is composed is the well-known figure of the carriage, the horses, the driver, and the passenger—the master who owns and should be in control of this entire conveyance. The carriage is the body, the horses are the emotions, the driver is the intellect, and the passenger is the master. Each has its own unique part to play. Any factor can fail: The carriage can break down. The horses can tire, run wild, or balk. The driver can fall asleep, or not attend to his work, or have foolish ideas of his own, or not be able to control the horses, or not take proper care of the carriage, or be in some other way incompetent. In such cases, the master can't get to his desired destination.

Then there are subtle connections that must be maintained between the various parts: The shafts by which the horses pull can break. The reins by which the driver controls the horses can be lost. The driver might not be listening and fail to hear the voice of the master. Such things can also be disastrous and prevent us from reaching the goal.

The important thing, it must be noticed, isn't the carriage or the horses or the driver, but the master—that he arrive safely at his destination. On the other hand, all this equipment is the means of his reaching that destination. Without it he doesn't get there.

Jacob Boehme offers another illustration. It is embodied in his interpretation of Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan. Now, the "certain man" who falls among thieves along the road to Jericho isn't just anybody. No. He is this same master—the right man, the image of God, a child of the eternal power and wisdom. But in each one of us men and women he is in a very sad condition—beaten by robbers, stripped of his royal clothing, and left for dead in the side ditch.

And the very point and essence of wisdom is to be

able to find this man, to recognize him, and to assist him back to health and to his rightful position. This is very difficult to do, because even if this poor wounded man is noticed by us, few have the wit to recognize who he is, or the courage and sympathy to do what needs to be done. Or we may have other, more urgent business. Then too, perhaps we are ourselves the very thieves who plotted and perpetrated this crime in the first place. If we are presently living it up on the loot which that attack provided, why should we want to become involved again, or to make amends? So our problem may become complicated and difficult.

The point of meditation is to revive and restore this almost-dead prince to health and to his rightful heritage. It is an attempt to put the carriage and all that pertains to it under the perfect control of the master, who alone understands the proper destination.

There are certain obvious errors to be avoided in doing this. The carriage isn't the master, of course, nor is the intellect, or the horses. The truth is that the master within isn't of the same quality or constitution as any of these other elements of human nature. His life is incomprehensible to them and will forever remain so. Each element will share to the fullest of its ability in his success—or in his failure—but the highest values and meanings in the master's life are quite beyond their grasp, just as human values and purposes are beyond the comprehension of dogs and cats.

This, therefore, is what meditation tries to do—to revive and restore this half-dead prince—to hear and be obedient to the master within, so that the human conveyance can arrive safely at its proper destination. And it is the hope and expectation of this fast to improve the conditions of the carriage, horses, and driver,

and strengthen the subtle connections that allow them to work together in harmony and to be more responsive to the instructions of the master.

MIDNIGHT. Tired, and to bed.

Thursday, April 1

7:45 A.M. A bright, clear, cold morning, 17°, perfectly calm. Rested well but awoke at 3:30 choking and gagging from a fiery discharge in my throat. Scrubbed my mouth and again to bed, sleeping another couple of hours. Up about 6:30. Sleep is deeper, in my case, and less of it is required while fasting; but it is also harder to come by. On the other hand, resting quietly is increasingly delicious, and physical exercise increasingly tiresome.

The fact that I continue to exercise a good deal as well as write all this will undoubtedly shorten the fast. But a record length, or any particular length at all, isn't of much concern.

The discharge from my mouth and the continual spitting is the most disagreeable symptom so far. The lemon mouthwash may or may not be worthwhile. I may use it occasionally, but it isn't particularly pleasant. It suppresses one bad taste by another which is little or no better. Makes the mouth and tongue feel dead. Like every medication, it has its price—action and then afterward reaction, absolutely unavoidable anywhere in nature. I wonder if it may suppress one of the body's vital eliminative functions. My judgement is that it could do just that.

The reader might wonder about the taste. It's not

like anything commonly tasted—very vile, perhaps the flavor of excrement. It is located on the upper surface of the tongue and around the back of the throat. There is also a burning sensation, which can in some measure be relieved by opening the mouth wide and puffing air in and out. My breath is probably equally vile, an inevitable symptom of fasting. I would judge that the surface of my tongue is feverish, although my skin temperature is cool, perhaps slightly below normal. I think we have a thermometer, and I'll try to determine if these opinions are right.

These unpleasant symptoms seem to increase when I rest or lie down. My interpretation is that my tongue is now in the process of eliminating various poisons that I have incorporated into myself. The organ and location for this process may seem unusual, and yet it is altogether fitting that it should be as it is.

It is also possible to see man as a symbol, a figure of all the powers and workings of nature. This view is shared by many, and perhaps by all mystics and visionaries. This is how Boehme puts it: "For man is the great mystery of God, the microcosm, or complete abridgement of the entire universe. He is the *mirandum Dei opus*, God's great masterpiece, a living emblem and hieroglyph of time and eternity. And therefore to know where he came from and what his temporal and eternal being and well being is, must be that *one* necessary thing toward which all our chief study should aim. In comparison to that all the wealth of the world is only dross, and unprofitable to us."¹¹

Fasting has often been considered a form of penance; and penance, correctly conceived, is a means of eliminating obstacles to our spiritual progress. There is nothing to prevent anyone from walking immediately into the innermost courts of heaven. Nothing, that is,

except obstacles. And these obstacles are within ourselves. They are a part of ourselves. In a deep sense they *are* ourselves. It is like a man elected to political office. It seems there are so many fine things he might accomplish in that office, but he soon discovers that he isn't free to do all those fine things. He has obligations. And in fact, the very same forces that enabled him to attain that office are also the forces that enslave him.

It's the same with the forces that enslave each one of us. They are all the things that make us what we are. And what would we be without them? We don't know. Something very different; perhaps nothing at all. We are usually afraid even to think about that. And experience has shown us that losing or abandoning those elements of our egos can be extremely disorganizing, frightening, and painful. That's why we don't march straight into heaven. Yet, a few do. They have the courage, the raw guts, to do this. And of course they are brilliantly successful. They throw off all their impediments like so many filthy rags and go boldly right on in, being welcomed with tremendous reverence and enthusiasm. *The truth is, that place is most repulsive to our egos. And beautiful egos are most repulsive to that place.*

Real penance, or repentance, is a process of breaking up and displacing egotistic elements. The clearest illustration of this is the crucifixion of Jesus. He, Christians believe, took upon himself the penalties of sin for all. But these penalties aren't some arbitrary decrees issuing from an arbitrary judge far away beyond the skies somewhere. Rather, they are the elements of our own corrupted egos that must be made evident and transmuted before we can become capable of attaining our proper fulfillment.

Boehme, in his *Signature of All Things*, pursues this,

the meaning of the crucifixion, at great depth. Here is the perfect figure of true repentance illustrated in every minute detail—the bright livid stripes against the pale skin, the crown of thorns, the purple robe of false self-love, the jeering, the spitting, the tearing out of the beard, the nails, the thirst, the weariness, the nakedness, the pain, the vinegar, the refused drugs, the women at the cross, the vanished disciples. These, along with an infinite number of other details, show exactly how the process proceeds.

In relation to fasting seen as a penance, it is enlightening that the tongue and the mouth should bear a major weight of the process. Effects always match their causes, as in the case of the three nails driven into the hands and feet of Jesus, and all the terrible things men have accomplished with their hands and feet.

It is the same with our mouths and tongues. There are no more important organs in the whole human body—or any part more corrupted. In Scriptures, the mouth and jaws are used as the very symbols of hell. "All the labor of man is for his mouth," wrote Solomon. Although there are many remarkable references to the mouth in Scripture, it is the tongue that really receives the accolades: "Hide me from the scourge of the tongue.—A wholesome tongue is a tree of life.—Death and life are in the power of the tongue.—Whoever keeps his tongue keeps his soul.—A soft tongue breaks bones.—His tongue is a devouring fire.—Let us smite him with the tongue." And many others.

The most widely known reference to the tongue is from the book of James. James has sometimes been thought to be, as far as can be judged from their extant writings, the most profound and perceptive of all the apostles—a judgement with which I concur.

"Behold, we put bits in horses' mouths, that they

may obey us; and we turn about their whole bodies. Behold also the ships, though so great, and driven by fierce winds, yet they are turned about with a very small rudder to wherever the pilot wishes. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasts great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. So is the tongue among our members. It defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of nature, being itself inflamed by the fire of hell.

“For every kind of beast, bird, serpent, and things of the air has been subdued by men. But the tongue cannot be tamed. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless God the Father. With it also we curse men, who were made after the image of God. Out of the same mouth proceeds both blessing and cursing. Brothers, such things should not be.”¹²

And so, my beloved tongue, you will have to put up with this momentary distaste and inconvenience. Perhaps it might even persuade you to give up a small part of your dearest poison.

7:00 P.M. Almost dark. Been very weary, and have a sort of all-gone feeling. In a way, this is due to not having eaten for over a week. In a way, it is also due to the energy expended on writing and other chores. Everything written so far has been reworked and typed. But I am sure my weariness is also due to something more profound—the need of deeper forms of nourishment. I hadn’t expected it to be so, but I have found that deep and satisfactory meditation has been harder to come by during this fast—much harder.

This empty, weak, and distraught feeling is something every contemplative has been very intimately and distressingly aware of, no matter what his eating habit.

Jesus, for example, must have felt it intensely. Why do we suppose he went out alone to pray all night after speaking to the crowds all day? Did he do that out of some presumed religious duty? Man's spiritual pilgrimage is far more immediate, real, and earnest than that. He went out all night because he was weak, empty, exhausted, hungry. His available reserves of spiritual energy had been spent and needed to be replenished. He desperately needed nourishment; he couldn't possibly have continued if he hadn't received it.

There exists a very prevalent error concerning the spiritual life. Perhaps it creeps in through the common idea of spiritual growth. There is some truth to the idea of growth, but it has also been the basis for much misunderstanding. True, every saint grows. But every sinner, even the most wicked and abandoned person, also grows. Both grow in the sense that by their actions they accumulate something which might be called either merit or demerit.

This process of constant accumulation is also a process of constant rejecting and losing. Neither the saint nor the sinner simply adds on to what he already has. Instead, they both keep adding on to fill the vacancies left by what they have rejected. This is a fact of life that is generally overlooked. One can't simply add good things onto the bad things he already has, or add bad things onto the good things he already has. No. We just aren't built that way. One can only add something to take the place of what he has abandoned—better things to take the place of the worse things he has rejected, or worse things to take the place of the better things he has rejected. To do one thing means not to do the opposite thing. Because of this, the idea of growth, as it is commonly used, can be misleading.

A better idea might be that of a traveler moving along a road or a path. The path may go along the level, or it may climb upward, or it may descend downward. If he travels upward, he necessarily gets farther away from and begins to lose sight of the downward path. Or if he goes downward he necessarily begins to lose sight of the upward path.

The point is that if one learns to depend on a certain kind of spiritual nourishment, then he becomes more and more addicted to it. And what may once have nourished and strengthened him will no longer do so. His former food, whether mental, emotional, or physical, becomes further away; also, he can no longer digest it, as it were. Without this higher nourishment he has become accustomed to he gets weak, powerless, and may even be in danger of dying. Anything less than his proper food won't help him anymore, and as we have said, the other is no longer available to him. The person on an upward path will simply die on what supports someone on a level or a downward path.

The same thing is true of the latter. Everyone requires the food suitable to his spiritual condition. Of course, it is possible to ascend or descend quite rapidly. That is sometimes done, but this is the exception rather than the rule, and the spiritual food requirements still hold. The crude for the crude, the fine for the fine. That is nature's law.

This is why contemplatives must spend such remarkably long periods in prayer and meditation, which seems foolish and an unnecessary waste of time to others. And of course, to non-contemplatives it would be, since they have no idea what is being done, and thus it has no really vital connection with their own personal activities and requirements.

In a similar way, religious and spiritually perceptive

persons almost without exception have had ideas about hell. However, this skeptical and self-assured generation (or the one that is rapidly passing away) rejects all such perceptions. Surely God is too good to create a hell or to condemn even the worst person to it. And this is true. God doesn't create hell or condemn a single person to it.

Hell is the condition we create by ourselves whenever we have completely separated ourselves from God. It is the place we tend to rush toward at our own volition with the greatest eagerness and delight. And God does everything that is possible to prevent us from creating such conditions or propelling ourselves headlong into them. But men are sparks of the divine omnipotence. We can create or do anything we want—even that.

The medieval ideas of hell are quite incredible. They were developed to frighten children. But we are no longer children, and not so easily frightened. The delights of hell, Swedenborg tells us, are so exquisite they far surpass anything that can be known on earth, such as the delights of hatred, revenge, fornication, theft, pride, self-love, etc. Of course, any of these are frightening enough to anyone who is in the way of avoiding such things, or happens to consider them insanities.

Most of us live in such a warm, well-nourished, soft, snug, padded, protected niche in the world that we may have forgotten the elemental and implacable rigors of nature. Even a minor earthquake in a large city deranges many. What would happen in a major quake? The survivors might find it unthinkably terrifying. But in fact, the worst quakes in recorded history were only a few of nature's very minor tremors. Now all of us are aware of the unimaginable force and violence latent

in the atomic structure of all material substance. Yet the incredible fury of atomic and hydrogen bombs releases only a very minute fraction of the energy in a few pounds of material.

It may well be that the environment of the earth is one of the most pleasant and benign that exists anywhere in the material universe. Consider the violence of the sun, where streams of incandescent material explode hundreds of thousands of miles into space, where the corona is now thought to be heated to millions of degrees purely by the incredible din of that place. Nothing that has or could possibly occur on earth could compare with such elemental fury and violence.

And the sun is only a moderately active star. Think of the others, larger, hotter, and incomparably more violent. Then there are the white dwarfs, as heavy as the sun but only the size of the earth. Imagine the conditions there, the terrible crushing weight and pressures. And now there are the neutron stars, the weight of the sun but only ten miles in diameter. Their structure has been worked out theoretically, but the actuality of them staggers the imagination. It is thought there might be mountains on them about a centimeter high, but conditions would be so severe there that all the energy a man expends during his entire lifetime wouldn't be enough to scale one. Even more incredible are the black holes in space—huge suns that have collapsed and become so dense that not even light can escape from them. Whatever approaches is swallowed up and passes completely out of existence.

So we can no longer doubt that the divine mercy evidenced in nature is balanced by an infinitely unrelenting sternness and rigor, the vortexes of which we should do all in our power to avoid and to escape.

10:30 P.M. Clear and cold, 26°, light breeze off the mountains. Not really feeling so chipper. Very tired, but not sleepy. Found a wool stocking cap for my chilly head, ears, and neck. Keeping warm is necessary as well as difficult. The constant discharge of saliva is a problem. Must continually spit; if any were swallowed, I'm afraid I'd get nauseated and begin to retch. And it interferes with sleeping.

Had a slight obstruction in my throat today, and it came up tonight with a very hot stinging substance. Deep down my throat is burning a bit now, and no doubt more poisonous stuff will soon be thrown up from below. The present surface symptoms will probably change and deepen as the fast progresses. Some gas occasionally and a little belching—which one usually associates with having eaten too much. However, I interpret the gas as a favorable omen, not disagreeable. Have given up the lemon mouth-rinse; I judge it to have been a mistake.

The best description of my mouth now might be that of a corpse.

Been listening to a recording of a Russian Orthodox choir—excellent, lots of bass, no accompaniment. Especially excellent is the Kyrie eleison (Lord have mercy), sung seventy-five times with subtle variations of tone and rhythm. As moving a thing as I have ever heard.

Will listen awhile and then retire. 11:30.

Friday, April 2

8:35 A.M. Another clear cool morning, 18°. To bed about midnight and awake at five, up about six. Much drier throat last night. Mouth and tongue less fiery now. Discharge beginning to come up from the throat now instead of down from the sinuses. Salivary glands still active. Somewhat weak, but traveling easy.

Have driven down five miles to a nearby reservoir, about a mile across, to watch the birds. Lots of ducks—resting; swimming, diving and flying. And a muskrat just pedalled by about thirty feet away, head up like a prow leaving a wide wake in the perfectly still surface. Grass and weeds beginning to spring up. Somehow, such elemental freedoms in nature deeply refresh us. They are necessary to our health—at least to mine. This need has been expressed by many poets:

The wild deer wandering here and there
Keep the human soul from care.

Or,

Wildness and wet, wildness and wet,
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.

My intention was to try to convey to the reader my idea of meditation so that he might better understand

some of the things I am attempting to do. I have already expressed some ideas about the nature of men, but we must also consider the nature of that which men attempt to reach or communicate with during meditation. It may be called God, Heavenly Father, Suchness, Reality, Universal Mind, Tao, Being, Brahma, the Beyond, Jehovah, the Absolute, or something else. The thing to keep in mind is that neither these nor any other words can touch or describe it. Words reach only as far as the relative world of phenomena, and they describe objects. But that Eternal Life, or Being, can never become an object, and it is never subject to the laws or processes that govern this relative world of phenomena.

An even more important fact to keep in mind is that all these words refer to only one thing, one indivisible unity. Scholars and other self-important people who assume to themselves the chief seats of knowledge, philosophy, theology, etc., have very different ideas about this. But one shouldn't allow oneself to be misled by them, and it may be that no one with serious spiritual intentions or a spark of spiritual insight ever does. Such persons are simply some of the perhaps necessary obstacles along the strait and narrow upward path.

Their shortcoming is that they see only the phenomenal world and therefore must necessarily judge everything from that point of view. From the point of view of phenomena, there is an infinite and irreconcilable diversity in religious perceptions and aspirations. But from a deeper, more internal point of view there is a beautiful harmony, as in a flower garden where the most diverse forms and colors only enhance the singular beauty of each particular leaf and flower.

A person who has seen this can express the truth in thousands of different ways, and each way will be

correct. But a person who has not seen it can express the thing in the very same thousands of ways and be wrong every time. No amount of sweating and studying of the phenomenal world can ever reach it. One has to enter in, and he has to do it himself.

Perhaps some of the clearest words on the nature of That which is beyond phenomena can be found in a little Chinese ninth-century Zen text, *The Huang Po Doctrine of Universal Mind*.¹³ It is an excellent thing in many ways, and my copy is almost worn out from use.

"All sentient beings," we read, "are nothing but universal mind, besides which nothing exists. This mind, which has always existed, is unborn and indestructible. It is not green nor yellow, and has neither form nor appearance. It does not belong to the categories of things which exist or do not exist, nor can it be reckoned as being new or old. It is neither long nor short, big nor small, but transcends all limits, measures, names, speech, and every method of treating it concretely. It is the substance you see before you—begin to reason about it and you at once begin to fall into error. It is like the boundless void which cannot be fathomed or measured."

It is in all things without distinction, he tells us, worms and Buddhas equally. If the aspirant finds what he is looking for, it will be this and nothing else. There isn't anything else to find—except the painful, illusory, relative world of phenomena.

"Mind is like the void, in which there is no confusion or evil, as when the sun wheels through it, shining upon the four corners of the world. For, when the sun rises and illuminates the whole earth, it is not the void which is bright, and, when the sun has set and it is dark everywhere, it is not the void which is dark. The phe-

nomena of light and dark alternate with each other, but the nature of the void remains unchanged. . . .

“The substance of the Absolute is inwardly like wood or stone, in that it is motionless, and outwardly like the void, in that it is without bounds or obstructions. It is neither subjective nor objective and has no specific location, being formless. Hence it cannot be lost. Those who hasten towards it dare not enter, fearing to hurtle down through the void with nothing to cling to or stay their fall. So they look to the banks and retreat as, for example, all those who search widely for the goal through intellection. Therefore those who seek the goal through intellection are like the fur (many), and those who attain intuitive knowledge of the Way are like the horns (few).”

This expresses the substance of the matter so well that it needs no elaboration. The question that might arise in the reader's mind is whether or not this is true. In other words: Is it factual? But everything that is factual lies in the phenomenal world. Therefore, it isn't factual. Truth, however, has somewhat broader and deeper connotations. Do facts convey ultimate truth? This is a question that is forever open to consideration. And the answer, it should be noted, is always and necessarily subjective rather than objective. It depends on our own social and personal orientation.

Some people steadfastly maintain that there is no such thing as God, or the Beyond. Others maintain that this great Eternal Being alone exists, and that the phenomenal world is the expression of this Being, and otherwise completely illusory. Who is right? The problem of ultimate truth, as we see it, is too difficult ever to be resolved. Both, in fact, may be right, but “right” only from their own point of view.

Swedenborg illustrates the problem this way: A truth

or an idea originates in the very innermost heaven. Then it travels down through the various lower heavens, the spirit worlds, the earths, and on down through the various hells. In the meantime it is constantly being changed to accommodate itself to the perceptions and conditions of each particular place.

By the time a particular truth finally reaches the ultimates, the most concrete and factual fundament of nature—that is, the deepest possible hells—the original perception has become completely opposite in every respect from what it was when it originated. And yet, actually it is still the very same thing. Opposites are intimately related, and they must always remain so if the fabric of nature is to remain firm and viable.

Thus, it isn't possible to say that the truth is absolutely one thing and not something altogether different. It all depends on the point of view from which the thing is considered. Facts are determined not only by experience, but also by the theoretical framework within which they are seen. But what bears even more surely and subtly on the problem is our own opening and closing to various kinds of experiences. And this is determined by the kind of person we are, what our forefathers, our society, our experiences, our hopes, successes, failures, aspirations, faith, or doubts have made us.

Boehme uses the illustration of a hot iron. It can be heated to the point where it appears to be merely heat and light and nothing else. In a similar way, humans may seem to assume divine qualities. But in a deep sense, that is an illusion. The iron is still iron. And the iron nuclei within the innermost electron shells, the real essence of iron, is still completely devoid of heat and light. It remains at absolute zero, 459° below,

and absolutely without light of any kind, no matter how incandescent its body might appear.

Is the brilliant iron therefore an illusion? In a way it is. In the very deepest sense, all nature may be illusion. But it is a beautiful and meaningful illusion. And I am convinced that it can become incomparably more beautiful and meaningful than anything men so far have either experienced or imagined.

11:15 A.M. Parked right next to the lake, writing in the car. The air cool and the sun warm. A gentle breeze stirring small waves which lap with a light tinkling sound on the shore. Lots of birds in the nearby bushes—red-winged blackbirds, finches, chickadees, wild sparrows, and others I can't recognize. The ducks are coming quite close now, riding the waves, pumping with heads bobbing, and feeding from the surface on something I can't see. Very beautiful fliers, and pleasing to watch as they come in to land on the water. Like Chuang Tzu watching fish from the bridge, one senses intuitively that all these life-forms are enjoying themselves, pleased with the gift of life coming from the gracious and generous hand of their creator.

9:40 P.M. Seem to be having unusually hard time this evening. Perhaps the lining of my stomach is now in the same morbid condition that my mouth has been. That would account for the vague nausea and malaise. But the mouth and tongue are somewhat easier. Still, there is the disagreeable sputum, which may stay with me the whole trip. A sort of burning sensation occasionally in my stomach and along the trachea. Working, no doubt.

Scrubbed up thoroughly in hopes that it might help morale. And no doubt it will help. An unusual thing

is that there seems to be no tenderness of the palate, which has always happened to me before on a fast of any duration, although some others I know haven't experienced it. Since my last fast I have acquired a full upper plate, which I wear constantly, and I was afraid the roof of my mouth might become even more sensitive and sore. Surprisingly, that hasn't happened, but there is a long time to go yet.

Will turn in early tonight and hope for a good rest. —A fresh wave of nausea, which I am sure now is coming from my stomach.

Watched the sun go down from the same spot on the lake. High cloudiness and a dull sunset. The birds fell to silence. I wonder how the night goes with them? They always seem so happy to see the sun rise. A flock of large broad-winged birds came in and settled on the distant shore. Couldn't identify them for sure; perhaps herons. Far-reaching voices that include a sort of gobble like a turkey, but clear and piercing over the water.

Saturday, April 3

6:20 A.M. 28° and bright: Slept fair last night. To bed about 10:30 and awake about 3:30. Mouth fairly dry all night. Without doubt, my stomach is the organ that must undergo penance for a while now. The symptoms aren't hunger symptoms—more of a burning sensation together with an occasional rolling and tumbling. My stomach doesn't feel in any shape to accept food now, or to want it.

Weighed in at 158, which is more of a weight loss than I had expected—fifteen pounds in eleven days. But that pace will have to slow down. I'll slow down, and the projected length of the fast may shorten. The easy reserves go first, and then those more difficult to come by. My body will cry more over losing those. I can still grab a roll of meat around my midriff, a good deal of which must be fat, but when my belly gets tight as a bowstring there'll be more room for complaint. Don't think my appearance has altered much yet. Late in the fast, one begins to look more and more like a refugee camp victim.

The family has a trip planned today. To Ouray, my brother's, about eighty-five miles distant. A beautiful and enjoyable trip, but I haven't been looking forward

to it. The driving will be up to me and may become somewhat tiring. We will see. Our car is good and reliable, but ancient.

7:30 P.M. Home again uneventfully. Tired, but less so than I had feared. Gone all day. About an hour's rest and a little sleep. My driving was unaffected, so far as I could determine. One is weaker, but the mind and senses are, if anything, more alert.

The constant salivation is a nuisance, but a relatively simple one. Stomach queasy. Got up quickly from lying down on a couch and almost blacked out for a second or so. Thought I would fall, but recovered quickly. This is a common symptom, but the first time in this fast. Must be more careful to rise slowly.

Waited in the car in Delta while my wife shopped. Intrigued by the faces of the people passing. So many were drawn, painful, hard. Yet the people were well dressed and well fed, obviously affluent and lacking nothing they really wanted, seemingly self-assured in that abundance. What will they be like when this easy unnatural windfall vanishes and they are left entirely to their own inner resources?

An experience which may seem incredible to many, but which is very significant, and I will record. Have realized I must spend more time and energy on deep meditation and less on other activities. But the approaches to this have been unexpectedly difficult. However, more success yesterday, last night, and today. And strange to say, this success appeared to be associated with my general nausea and roiling stomach. And now I am sure the two things are intimately associated: After I have begun to meditate deeply, my stomach begins to churn.

It is a commonly accepted idea by those whose

fortune affords them a material abundance, which allows them to think positively, and whose fate is to be the chief beneficiaries of technology's rapid exploitation and destruction of nature's resources, that spiritual success is quickly followed by material success. I don't believe this was ever taught by any of the world's great saints or-seers. Jesus' teachings and his experience were certainly opposite to this, and the same must be said for the rest of the world's great spiritual leaders, perhaps without exception.

Ah, take the Cash and let the Credit go—this is the motto of the god of this world. He pays all indebtedness in cold cash immediately, leaving one not even the slightest shred of credit. But the God who is the eternally creative spirit operates otherwise. He pays off almost entirely in credit. Cash is extremely hard to come by from that source—only just enough to keep us alive and operating, and very little more.

Of course there is good reason for this. Our creator has extremely long-range purposes and benefits in view, while our lusts are all incredibly short range. Then too, humans produce better right on the knife-edge of necessity. Satiated, we are content to relax, retire, drift with the current, to work very little or not at all. Whatever branch bears fruit, Jesus observed, is pruned back so that it might bear even more fruit.

In relation to meditation and my distressed stomach, my view is that the Spirit with which one must work in meditation is infinitely more intelligent than men can ever hope to be. He understands every circumstance, even the most minute, together with its history, meaning, and all the possibilities latent within it. No sparrow falls to the ground without the Heavenly Father's knowledge, Jesus noted, and the very hairs of men's heads are all numbered.

Now, I would prefer to avoid this nausea. And I might pray earnestly, and even successfully, that it be removed. But the true course of wisdom may be to endure it briefly as a means to a higher goal, the deeper cleansing of my body and mind.

In any case, I am committed, and hope to become even more committed, to following patiently and without question wherever that Spirit might lead. My own personal comfort or discomfort, or a few years or life more or less, is after all not important. Like Mrs. Gandhi, I believe it is better to die than to live by any means that one judges to be contrary to truth and wisdom. Living or dying aren't chief points of reference on my compass—nor on that of anyone with principles, or with any grasp of the realities of human existence on this planet.

What *are* the chief points of reference? They could be established traditional precepts, as with Mrs. Ghandi and many other heroes. If the precepts are good, as in her case they were, then that may be a sufficient guide to carry one to the goal. But almost without exception, age-old traditional precepts have been shattered today. This forces us to look back to a better and deeper support—the Spirit whose wisdom has created every good and viable principle, precept, or support of human life.

So I intend to continue to contact that spirit even if the immediate effect is quite painful. One recalls Chuang Tzu's story of General Clouds, a wise, exalted, nebulous, mythical personage whom Confucius once met. Confucius, of course, was interested in practical mundane matters, governing states, ensuring good crops, etc., etc. So the questions he put to this wise and exalted fellow had to do with such things. But General Clouds wasn't particularly interested. "How should I know

that?" he exclaimed, "All I do is wander about observing unexpected events."

But continually guided, we might add, by the eternally wise creative spirit.

Sunday, April 4

Twelfth day of the fast.

7:20 A.M. To bed about 11:30 and awake about 6:30. Slept well. Bright spring morning, 28°. My copious flow of saliva is an unusual symptom. I have never experienced it before on anything near this scale. And in most cases, I read, saliva secretion almost stops when one begins to fast. In a few cases, however, it may become thick, tough, transparent, gelatinous, slimy, and then grey, yellowish, greenish, or even pus-like. Right now it is the consistency of ordinary sputum, somewhat darker, with the odor of a decaying animal carcass.

There are indications that I may have a bowel movement. This function varies considerably with individuals and their immediate needs. I have fasted a number of times and have never had a bowel movement after the first day. This function begins again a day or so after the fast is broken, and then proceeds regularly. This is a common experience, but it is also common to have occasional bowel movements at any stage of the fast, according to the need and condition of the faster.

Weight loss is also much greater at the beginning than at the end of a fast. So I may still have a lot of reserves to go on. However, at institutions where pa-

tients are fasted as a treatment for disease, exercise is kept at a minimum and bed rest demanded. So my continuing mental and physical activities will without doubt burn up reserves more rapidly.

2:55 P.M. Bright, breezy, and cool. The Calley verdict is the big news—a deeply significant thing, shattering in some ways and hopeful in others. In the long run, it may bear far more vitally on the health of the American spirit than landing men on the moon. Every shot a nation fires or bomb it drops explodes silently and inexorably in the depths of its own consciousness. The internal damage one inflicts on himself equals the external damage inflicted on others. Who doesn't know this, which is merely the principle of cause and effect? All nature is supported by this fact, this law of karma, as pitiless and inexorable as a freight train or the law of gravity. There is an escape, but it is costly, not easily found, and few ever choose to accept it.

Attended church this morning. As an institution the church is dying. In places it seems to revive momentarily by embracing showmanship, super-salesmen, slick organizational methods, or a mindless conservatism. But all these are merely exploitative techniques which stimulate in the short run but enervate and insure the church's doom even more certainly in the long run.

The point is that, as the Book of Proverbs says, where there is no vision the people perish. Many places there is a need, and also a hunger, for a really vital nourishing vision. Yet almost all of what is being offered is either poor, or worthless, or worse than worthless. Many see salvation as going back to something or other. But there is no going back. If the principles guiding an army are comfort, self-preservation, and ignorance, then that army is worthless. But the ideals

of sacrifice, daring, and intelligence make it invincible. So with churches. Whoever preserves his life loses it. The grain has to fall into the ground and lose its own life.

On the other hand, there are points of spiritual ferment in many places that could conceivably blossom into a very promising creativity.

10:15 P.M. Everything moving along well. Quite tired. Rested for a half hour several times today, but no sleep. Stomach slightly queasy. Been listening to the radio and record player, resting, thinking, and meditating. Enjoyed several religious broadcasts—good music, but turned the talk off and the record player on, with Handel's *Messiah*.

The constant salivation is an unusual symptom. Talked today to a friend with some fasting experience. His mouth was always powder dry, and spitting was impossible. I have to spit every few minutes. Don't know the precise physiological explanation, but wonder about a figurative one. The profound uncleanness of my mouth may symbolize a verbal uncleanness. Have in mind Isaiah's cry at seeing God's glory: "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and live among a people of unclean lips!"

This includes all of us, and this cleansing could be of the many past crimes committed by my mouth. Or it could be a deep cleansing for a better use and performance in the future. At present it is quite unpleasant. The smell must arise from dead and putrified cells being sloughed. I wonder if they died recently—but they smell long dead. More likely they are, hidden deep and covered over. Their exact origin and history would interest me very much.

"The trumpet shall sound. . . . !"

"Worthy is the Lamb to receive power and riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing."

"Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto him, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne."

"Forever and ever."

"Amen, Amen."

Powerfully conceived and executed. Excellent and inspiring. 10:45, and soon to bed.

Monday, April 5

10:10 A.M. To bed about 11:30 and awake at 5:30; up about 6:30. Slept soundly. Bright, calm, 26°. Picked today for housekeeping chores. Been spending much of my time in a camper I built several years ago—roomy, solid, heavy and comfortable—on blocks now. Didn't cost much, less than \$200, plus a lot of work. Wood with aluminum exterior, well insulated. It is parked about a hundred yards from the house, a very private and convenient place for study and writing. My writing table is a sideglass from an old school bus the family traveled around the country in some years ago. The cab overhang is big enough for a mattress covered with rugs and a large sheepskin.

My housekeeping isn't fastidious, but occasionally it has to be done. Now the desk is perfectly clean, and the rugs on the floor have been taken out and beaten. All this cleaning up took about two hours and left me quite exhausted. Not completely finished with it—some books and papers to be arranged yet, but will do that some other time. So exhausted I had to rest half an hour before even thinking of writing anything. Slight exertions tire me quickly now, especially anything as uninspiring as housecleaning. But I have found that it doesn't pay to allow oneself to get snowed under with debris so as not to be able to lay hands on things

easily. And a certain neatness improves one's outlook considerably. As for luxury or fine expensive things, they hold no attraction for me; I reject them on principle.

The walls of the camper are lined with shelves containing books, papers, magazines, and material on various subjects that have interested me, such as pollution, radiation, Hopis, poetry, and mysticism. There are also letters, and manuscripts in various stages of completion. Each subject is in a place by itself for easy access and reference—I hope. Office work, like housecleaning, has never interested me, but a certain minimum of it is necessary.

Usually I am a voracious reader. During the last several years, I have been reading perhaps three books a week—usually late at night after work, when the family is asleep. But during this fast I have read little—several news magazines, a couple of papers, and a little material bearing directly on this writing. Otherwise nothing. No time. But also, I must report, I've had no interest in reading at all, which I find strange and unexpected.

During the last year or so, much of my reading has been on scientific subjects, mostly nuclear theory and phenomena, stuff most folks regard as being somewhat heavy. I have been interested in the theory of atomic structure for many years, but now a nuclear project has been moved into our back yard—they are exploding atomic bombs underground to release natural gas. I have been among those rigorously opposing this and have been boning up on the subject as much as possible and writing numerous letters and broadsheets on the subject, as well as engaging in other anti-nuclear-contamination activities. Present-day nuclear theory and practice is an intensely interesting subject and

seems to me to have the most profound and far-reaching implications.

Have driven down to the same pleasant spot on the lake to write. Very few birds. Maybe too late in the day, and now they must be thinking seriously about nesting. A number of ducks along the edge in the distance quacking noisily, and one or two flying overhead now and then. A black cat hunting mice in the matted grass near the shore.

A strange new symptom: a slight cramping in my upper left arm, barely noticeable. Stomach still uneasy. No bowel movement yet. Saliva flow somewhat less copious, but no less vile. Lips very parched and dry. Otherwise, moving along steadily on an even keel.

Sometimes during a fast time drags, but very little of that yet. Writing all this is in a way a chore and a distraction, but it also helps to focus my thoughts and intentions. So whether, from the point of view of the fast itself, it will prove to have been a profit or a loss, remains to be seen.

The reader may wonder whether or not he himself would have the resources to forego eating for, say, a month. Almost everyone, perhaps, has the actual physical resources to do that. Calling these resources up so that they can be used is the problem.

Four Canadian geese just flew around, low overhead. Scouts reconnoitering the place for the flock to follow, no doubt.

There is no question but that men and women have great resources lying unused. Feats of strength that seem impossible have been accomplished by just ordinary men and women acting under some momentary necessity. Calling up our energy resources is largely a matter of will. Of course, will is also a complex phenomenon made up of many diverse factors. In fasting,

one has to want to do it. The more clearly and powerfully he sees a meaning and purpose in what he is doing, the more easily he will be able to call up resources to accomplish that purpose.

My own view is that men and women naturally have tremendous resources—far in excess of those we might be able to call into activity. The problem is that we aren't able to use our powers, not that we lack them.

A well-known example of drawing upon unsuspected resources occurred in 1963, when a bush pilot and his passenger were forced down in northern British Columbia. They were given up for dead, but after being lost for seven weeks in the deep snow and bitter cold of midwinter, they were found alive and well. The story made headlines all over the world, as well as articles in large-circulation magazines.

The couple—Ralph Flores, a 42-year-old pilot and a Mormon, and his passenger, Helen Klaben, a 21-year-old Jewish girl from New York—had survived the winter weather with almost no food, inadequate clothing, and only the crudest shelter built from the plane's seats, fabric, etc. What they did was thought to have been impossible.

On the plane were four tins of sardines, two tins of fruit, and some crackers, which Miss Klaben ate during the first few days. A tube of toothpaste was eaten somewhat later. The girl, who had been "pleasingly plump," lost thirty pounds. And the pilot, who was much more active during the ordeal—gathering wood, hunting unsuccessfully, and tramping distress signals in the snow—lost forty pounds.

How did they do it? They lived on the pilot's faith. He never once wavered in his belief that they would be found, or in his belief in divine protection—or in his

confidence that their ordeal was somehow part of the wisdom of Providence. As a profoundly convinced Mormon, his purpose seemed to be to convert his Jewish passenger to the one true religion. How successful he was is questionable. But she couldn't have failed to be impressed by the experience.

At any rate, both survived in good condition what would usually be thought to be impossible—exposure to the northern winter weather, most of the time far below zero, with almost no shelter and no food at all for over a month. But perhaps anyone could do that. Anyone could do it, that is, as long as he had enough faith and courage to call up the resources hidden within his body, mind and spirit.

12:15 P.M. My muskrat friend is still busy swimming back and forth industriously. A small bird I don't recognize is building a nest along the bank. I'm fascinated by the sunlight flashing and sparkling on the waves far out across the water—a common but profoundly complex and meaningful phenomenon. Just trying to enter into and inwardly understand that brilliant random flashing and block out everything else.

3:00 P.M. Have driven up the Grand Mesa highway again this afternoon. Appreciating the elemental beauty and grandeur of nature is in no way inconsistent with the most ascetic practice. Very different in kind from human ostentation and ornament. Milarepa, the great Tibetan yogi, who lived continuously in caves, ate roots, and wore only one cotton garment, advised his followers to select a cave in inspiring surroundings. No lack of these in the Himalayas; friends who have seen them have told me.

And so it is also my choice to do that, especially

since inspiring surroundings happen to be so easily available. There are many back roads nearby which are better, but I'm afraid they may have wet spots now, and I don't want to get stuck. Could dig or chain out, but not anxious to spend any energy on such a pointless effort. I'll stay with the highway now, and take the back roads later.

Stopped a short way up the Mesa and pulled off among a thick stand of aspen. Very beautiful trees, even without their leaves. The snow patchy beneath them. Was checking over what had been written when a very bright bluebird flitted several feet from the opened window, as though it would like to come in but thought better of it. Lots of ring-necked pheasants near our place—bold and crowing this time of year. Stopped beside one in the road this morning and watched him from about six feet away for some time. He was curious about me too, but finally he ran off.

The sun among the aspen made it too hot down lower, so I have driven to the top, where the air is quite chilly. Deep snow everywhere beneath the heavy stands of spruce. The sky a deep cloudless blue. Parked next to a beautiful lake, all snow-covered now. The air perfectly still. Squirrels churring.

One reason why people have fasted has been to receive visions or, I would say, insight. The young men of many Indian tribes did this; it was one of the qualifications for manhood. He went out alone and fasted until he caught a vision of his life's work and purpose. Perhaps this changed his name or his standing in the community.

In a way that is also my purpose. But the commonly held idea of vision may have to be modified. I started out, as everyone probably does, with very gross materialistic ideas about spiritual things. But true visions

aren't seen objectively, like the ghost of dear aunt Susan that the medium produces. They are seen inwardly—with an inner eye. Those who happened to be in the temple with Isaiah, or on the banks of the Chebar with Ezekiel, while they were seeing their tremendous visions no doubt continued about their business as usual. So far as outsiders could see, nothing unusual was happening at all.

I have never considered myself to be psychic or subject to visions. However, this statement must be qualified. On several occasions things have so impressed me inwardly, including even visual images, that they haven't dimmed in the least with the passing of time. Rather, they have become even more vivid. One in particular might be of interest to the reader.

It was the winter of 1937. I was in high school and living in Denver. Although I have never before told this to anyone, I will record it now.

My life was in tremendous turmoil, as is no doubt true of many teenagers. I was at odds with my family, and in fact with the whole world—extremely oppressed, beaten down and angry, with dark forebodings, and grappling hopelessly with immovable obstacles. The turning point was a movie, James Hilton's *Shangri-La* (*Lost Horizon*). I was walking home late at night after seeing it—in a snowstorm, wet heavy flakes, but not cold—and was thinking about what I had seen. Suddenly I was in a different world, walking lightly, relieved of all that weight and darkness, and full of joy and exuberance.

It was then that I had this inward vision. It could have been a mere fantasy, except for several things: It has proved deeply meaningful to my life, and it has endured.

I saw myself as an old man, poorly clothed and

walking in a snowstorm down a city street. I was cold and hungry, with seemingly no place to go to get out of the storm. I passed well-lighted houses filled with comfortable, well-fed, laughing people. Yet somehow I knew that none of them would receive me, and that they were in fact so hostile to me that they would do me harm if they had the opportunity.

Yet, strange to say, I was also walking in Shangri-La, with the most exquisite joy and eternal expectation. In the face of this internal blessedness, the harsh external circumstances amounted to nothing at all—nothing.

It was only a momentary glance. Then it was gone. But it was enough. The key. And it has never been forgotten.

Strange? Unusual? Yes. But, like the vision the Indian boy receives, it has remained the primary clue to my own personal destiny. Of course, I haven't always lived up to it. But whenever I enter deeply into my own experiences, I feel its constant tug.

That was a turning point in my life. Our family had always attended church regularly—various denominations, but mostly a primitive form of Methodism. However, the claims of the revivalist tradition never attracted me. It seemed too shallow. Also, strange to relate, movies were considered the work of the devil. And I had gone that night contrary to a firm parental command not to.

Although I knew scripture and church doctrine far better than the average boy, I plunged into those studies with complete abandon day and night for several years, until I almost knew scripture backwards. And I combed the library in search of all kinds of religious ideas and practices—only Christian, of course, since I firmly believed, without having the least actual basis for the idea, that all non-Christians were quite beyond the pale.

The shallowness of the churches, especially of their leaders, became continually more evident to me. And I wasn't one to hide my opinions. So, although I attended many services, probably at least three a week, in various churches, I was always an outsider. And I was probably thought to be a nice young fellow in some ways, but one who specialized in getting in close with sharp, slicing, disruptive ideas.

At that time I received another deep and inescapable impression—an overpowering disgust and repulsion for the artifacts of civilization. At the time I worked delivering papers, and later office supplies, on a bicycle. I was a tireless rider, so I rode times without number into the bleak, dry foothills west of Denver. And up Clear Creek, where Highway 6 is now—then it was an abandoned railroad track. I packed out behind Lookout Mountain and other places. My purpose was to get away from every man-made thing. All wild things—animals, rocks, trees, plants, the sky—moved me deeply. It was fairly easy to find secluded places near Denver then. Later I acquired a motorcycle and went much farther. But that, I discovered, was a mistake. The bicycle was better.

Another lasting impression I had at that time is also worth noting: I was certain the world was headed for war. I was as sure of it as I was that the sun would rise. This was several years before World War II. I had no vision about this, just a deep inner certainty, which of course proved to be correct.

10:30 P.M. Stayed on the mountain until the shadows were long and the air quite cold. Drove down slowly, hoping to see deer; but perhaps it is too early for any pasture high enough.

The more I consider the still-vigorous salivation, the

more remarkable and significant it seems to become. This, at least, sets one goal for the fast. It shouldn't be broken until my mouth becomes sweet and clean. And in fact, this may be the real goal of the whole endeavor, but I have not been aware of it.

I scrub vigorously and often, not unlike Lady Macbeth. But not all the perfumes of Arabia could sweeten that little hand. With me it's the mouth.

I remember quite clearly this aspect of my other long fast. Toward the end my mouth became quite sickening, and there was a terrible bitterness that couldn't be gotten rid of in the pit of my stomach. Although the fast continued for over five weeks, I never saw the thing through. I panicked, largely from a failure to grasp some of the facts of our human situation.

But now I hope to stay with it until my mouth and tongue become sweet and clean. At least that long. Until that happens I'll not begin to think about breaking it—the Lord willing. A clean mouth should certainly be worth a few missed meals.

The cleansing of Isaiah's mouth, in his great vision, was done with a live coal of fire taken from the altar and laid on his lips by one of the Burning Ones, tremendously powerful and majestic creatures at whose voices the thresholds of the temple trembled. In a roundabout way, that came up in our Sunday School discussion yesterday. All those who expressed an opinion believed that as one advances spiritually his inner conflicts are eliminated, until at last he has none at all. As usual, I was the dissenter.

An example is these Burning Ones. They each had six wings. With two they covered their feet, with two they covered their faces, and with two they flew. Now why did they cover their feet, the outermost elements

of their natures? Or their faces, the innermost? Doesn't this imply that they were by no means devoid of inner conflict? And using only one third of their capacities with which to function?

My view, and Boehme's, is not that some part of the conflict has to be overcome or eliminated, but rather that the situation be *illuminated*. The light proceeds from material nature just as though the material were mere light. But it never is, or can be; its innermost center, or nucleus, is still absolutely dark and absolute zero at the bone. This allows that center to become a firm basis from which light can proceed, as well as a fixed resistance upon which light can play. Without this cold, dark, solid center light could neither originate nor be perceptible.

Similarly, in its deepest core the conflict must remain. Otherwise, the light could never be known; the light within nature would die. But the light doesn't die. Emily Dickinson put it neatly. "Power is only pain, disciplined." No pain, no power.

11:00 P.M. Weary, and to bed.

Tuesday, April 6

Fourteenth day of the fast.

8:50 A.M. Another bright crisp morning. Slept well, but have discovered, as on other fasts, that I'm not requiring much sleep—perhaps five hours a day, or even less, considering I lay awake a long time before dozing off. Haven't and probably can't sleep during the day, although I stretch out and rest several times. But the sleep I do get is deep and refreshing.

Will be entering the third week of the fast this evening—the middle part, which I would expect to be the smoothest and easiest. This may or may not prove to be true. On my other long fast, the end became extremely steep and rough. But in many ways I am better prepared now, so we will see. Maybe it will be easy.

In some ways the fast is going well. Physically, it has gone at least as well as I expected. It was also my intention to write up the experience so that someone else might possibly benefit from it. How well or effectively this is being done remains to be seen. But however that may be, there has been up to now no lack of ideas presenting themselves to mind, or any difficulty committing them to paper. And the well gives no indication of running dry for a while.

In a deeper sense, the fast has been much less satisfactory and hasn't been accomplishing what I had hoped and expected it might. The thing isn't an endurance contest of any kind, nor is it a unique way of selling a book. The purpose of the fast, as I see it, is to accomplish spiritual work, and fasting happens to be one means of approaching that work. But (and I never want to lose sight of this fact) it is the work itself that is worthwhile and ultimately productive, not the tools with which the work is attempted, or even the fruit one imagines might result from one's work.

This work that I have proposed to do, and which I feel is tremendously productive for myself and also for others, hasn't gone along nearly as smoothly or effectively as I had supposed it would. Rather, it has been continually more difficult than when I was eating regularly. I have tried, but perhaps I haven't put enough energy and intelligence into it. At any rate, I intend to invest more of my intelligence and energy into it from now on.

On the other hand, it isn't always easy to judge how effective or productive one's labor actually is. Some things with a fine impressive appearance mean nothing at all, whereas other things with only a slight appearance prove to be profoundly significant. It is also true that spiritual labor under difficult circumstances, although more difficult, may also be more worthwhile.

But exactly what, the reader may ask, is the nature of this work we are considering? This question, as I see it, goes directly to the heart of man's spiritual life, to the heart and meaning of his very nature.

I will call this work meditation, although the word is inadequate and will undoubtedly conjure up wrong images in many readers' minds. However, since I am attempting to communicate here with words, some

word, however inadequate, will have to be used. Moreover, other words that might be used—contemplation, prayer, concentration—also conjure up wrong images, and yet they all point to the same thing. There are an infinite number of practices, techniques, explanations, aptitudes, and circumstances among men; but the true goal of every human being is always the same, in spite of these extremely diverse outward appearances.

It follows from this that the practices, techniques and explanations that appeal to me, or that I have acquired or developed, won't appeal to everyone. They can't; that should be obvious. Each one of us is only a tiny variously-colored spark, and what we would approach is infinitely greater than all the suns. On the other hand, my small grasp and perception of the thing might appeal to some. I believe that it could, which is my reason for writing.

Meditation is the attempt to reach that which is beyond phenomena. This is the purpose of all men's religious and spiritual activities. And if that is lost sight of, then the purpose of religion and of men's spiritual aspirations is lost sight of. Unfortunately, this has been neglected and almost forgotten today, which accounts, in my view, for the sad condition we are in.

3:35 P.M. Resting more today. Have been quite tired. Rest is pleasant as well as necessary. Just weighed in at 154 pounds. A 19-pound loss in almost fourteen days—about what might be expected. The reader might wonder about hunger. I believe that is controlled by one's imagination. I don't allow any thought of eating to enter my mind. The smell of food is delicious, and if I can't avoid it, I simply shut it out of mind.

I am rather weak, and I tire easily now. But quite alert mentally. The senses, particularly the sense of

smell, is much more than normally alert. My stomach and intestines roll a bit once in a while, and there is a small amount of gas and belching. The major and most disagreeable symptom is the constant salivation, which has a very putrid taste and odor. Almost nothing is coming from my nose or throat now, but from within my mouth. The color is a dark amber. This may come, at least partly, from a mixture of blood cells and small clots. And the sputum is laced with a white stringy substance.

My urine is extremely dark and heavy—volume perhaps normal, and giving no difficulties. I drink water whenever I want it—several mouthfuls an hour, perhaps.

Indications so far are that my mouth is the organ most drastically in need of cleansing. And the fast should continue at least until this has been accomplished. The symptoms, as well as their interpretation, are unusual and unexpected. But it isn't hard to accept them as essentially correct—and revealing.

To our original subject again. Meditation was defined as the attempt to reach that which is beyond phenomena. More correctly, it is one type of attempt to do that—the type I personally feel to be the most productive.

Questions may arise in the reader's mind about this. For example, does anything actually exist beyond phenomena? In many cases, this question arises out of a classical materialism whose scientific and theoretical basis has been destroyed by twentieth-century physics. So far as I am concerned, the battle around classical materialism is over—something exists beyond phenomena. But what is it? That is a livelier question.

Supposing there is something beyond phenomena, can men actually reach it? This question seems to have two

parts: Is it theoretically possible to reach it? And, have men actually done it?

A great many people claim to have done it—many millions. Furthermore, those who have had the most interest in doing it, and who have tried to lead others to do it, have been, in my view, the most outstanding men and women—spiritual leaders and giants. Are such people to be believed and followed? No matter what our theory, if a thing is actually done, then it has to be accepted. Theoretically, bumble bees appear incapable of flight, but that doesn't seem to hinder them much.

The theoretical question, however, deserves further consideration, and the answer, of course, depends on our philosophy—our world view. Mine is this: Human beings were designed with no other end in view than to be bridges linking the phenomenal world to that which is beyond phenomena. If this is true, then the attempt to do this isn't unnatural, since it follows man's deepest instincts and abilities. And not only is it possible to go beyond phenomena, but in the long haul it is the only activity that is humanly possible. Everything else is impossible.

This is my interpretation of the present-day individual and world-wide breakdown. We have rejected the only activity that is humanly natural and possible and tried to replace it with pursuits that are humanly unnatural and impossible. Of course, this can't work. And there is no way in the world to patch it up so that it will work.

10:15 P.M. Beautiful moonlight night, 40°. Orion almost gone, and the winter over. Extremely tired. Just when I had expected smooth sailing for a while, I ran into severe turbulence.

Can only describe it as being racked with a fever—something like that. An intense, inner physical struggle.

Although I was lying down during the worst sieges (not all that terrible really), my breathing was deep and labored. No doubt metabolism was high, the contestants needing plenty of oxygen.

Hard to say just what is happening during such times. My idea is that some old established fortifications are being attacked and, hopefully, broken up. As I see it, the things that give us trouble and eventually destroy us are established in the various poisons laced throughout our physical bodies. Where these poisons come from is subject to question. Perhaps we manufacture some ourselves; or they may be waste products from even the best foods, or who knows what chemical or nuclear poisons we have to breathe, drink and eat here in this technological fairyland?

The trouble with these poisons is that they have become a part of ourselves. We love them, we use them, and it distresses us to part with them. This is the essence of the struggle—ourselves against ourselves. And this is where intelligence comes in, or should—to help the right party, painful as that might be for us. I believe that fasting can be a means of breaking up these poisonous strongholds. And if, over and beyond that, we can cast some real light on the situation, then we should be able to come out ahead.

Felt, and still feel, like I might vomit. I'm a good vomiter but have never done it while fasting. I understand it can be one of the most disagreeable and weakening ordeals to be encountered.

During the worst of it, Handel's air that I had been listening to the other night kept running through my mind:

"But Thou didst not leave his soul in hell.
Nor suffer Thy holy one to see corruption."

Have decided to abandon the typewriter for the rest of the trip. Getting too steep for that now. I write with a pencil, work the material over, and then type it. I'll just write and rework, and type later. What might be written remains to be seen—no doubt something strange. I have a vivid verbal imagination, and we'll be traveling in some unusual, awesome, and perhaps terrifying country.

10:45 P.M. Will scrub good, and to bed.

Wednesday, April 7

7:40 A.M. Entering the third week. Cloudy; need rain badly here, but not much chance of it. Rested well after a long time getting to sleep. Better today, but quite stiff, especially through the neck, shoulders and back, after that little siege. Muscle pains here and there, light, not really painful, but noticeable. This is what I must have mistaken for a cramp in my arm.

What might please many readers was a bowel movement last night, and also this morning—neither voluminous. That also pleases me. Not that the body doesn't have other ways of elimination besides the bowels, but this is by far the easiest. We'd really be in a bad way without such less-exalted organs and their functions. I hadn't thought much about their value and service to us before.

But it also pleases me because I am certain that one of the most obvious physical effects of successful meditation is the assisting of all our eliminative processes. It encourages me to hope that worthwhile things are being and can be accomplished.

5:00 P.M. Have spent the day resting. Stomach somewhat queasy. Tried to vomit once, but no success. The flow of saliva continues at the same pace—remarkable, and no less nauseating.

Those who begin meditation must make a vast assumption—a leap of faith into the dark. There is no certainty, no clear vision, of where one might land. The assumption is that humans are essentially bridges, that somehow within our experience the phenomenal world can be linked to that which is beyond phenomena. If humans have the ability to do this, and if in fact they can never find their true fulfillment in any other way, then how does one begin to go about it?

This is a difficult but not impossible question. First, we might try to clarify the distinction between the phenomenal and the non-phenomenal, between the relative world of nature and the Being, the Beyond, that ultimate Creator who, Jesus taught, is a spirit which no man has ever seen at any time.

The phenomenal world and everything in it is easily defined. But whatever is beyond, beneath, above, behind, or outside of phenomena is also beyond, beneath, above, behind, or outside of any definition. So our ideas might begin with the easy and then progress to the difficult, from this to That, from here to There, from the obvious to the Unseen.

The ninth-century text on Universal Mind cited earlier defines the phenomenal world succinctly with the simple observation that whatever has *polarity* is phenomenal, relative, “this worldly.” Even the smallest particle of material substance has polarity, and every fragment of thought, idea, emotion, or feeling has it. Everything in nature is either new or old, here or there, in or out, up or down, good or bad, bright or dark, light or heavy, right or wrong, and is subject to analysis, to logic or illogic. These are some of the ways men recognize and explain polarity. Whatever can be touched by these or any other category is in the phenomenal

world of nature and isn't the Being beyond polarity that we are looking for.

The sayings and writings of mystics and contemplatives bristle with negatives: "Not that! Not that!" Reaching the Being beyond phenomena is in a sense the process of rejecting and peeling back all the illusory aspects of phenomena that hide the truth from us—and that we keep clinging to so desperately, as though our life depended on it. If we could only let go of phenomena even for a second, then we'd know. But we aren't very brave. And, nowadays at least, we have been misadvised.

We are afraid that our precious ego, and perhaps the whole world along with it, would fall into nothingness. How true—and how wonderful! Insofar as we can do that, we fall home—to our real home, our spiritual home, our eternal home, that which is absolutely nothing in relation to all of nature. But that "nothing" is our Creator, our Heavenly Father, the Pearl of Great Price, the Being who alone can make us actually human.

Everything objective has been created by That which can never be made an object. "For," scripture says, "the things which are seen were not made of things which appear." Not even the highest spiritual intelligence can make the innermost source of its own being completely objective. There can only be the perception and using of an infinite wisdom and power that reflects itself internally within the body and externally throughout every aspect of the environment.

Light provides a common but apt illustration. That mysterious substance crosses the void imperceptibly. Only by striking objects, by being absorbed or reflected by them, can light become apparent. In a similar way, Being only becomes apparent through phenomena. And

the really superior receptacle and mirror (or obstruction) of that eternal being beyond nature is the human body, mind, and spirit.

6:35 P.M. Dark and blustery, will surely rain. Just listened to a network interview of an M.D. who has written a book on fasting and is therefore presumably an authority on the subject. Inane.

We fail to reach consciously that which is beyond phenomena because of obstacles within our own thoughts and emotions. And these obstacles aren't accidental or easily removed, since they are constantly guarded and maintained by our egos. The truth is, we don't have much stomach for real repentance.

One major obstacle is the misconception that what we are looking for lies within nature, within the relative world of phenomena, the world of polarity.

"Men seek and don't find," wrote Boehme, "because they don't look in the naked ground where it lies, but in something or other where it never will be, or can be. They look in their own will, but don't find it. They look in their own desire, and never meet with it. They look for it in an image, or in an opinion, or in an affection, or in devotion or emotion. In this way they miss the substance by hunting shadows."

But this is no mere intellectual difficulty. We are so addicted to our illusions, so in love with them, that we can't possibly give them up. They are a part of us, like a cancer. It would be painful, or perhaps even kill us, to part with them—we think. A terrifying prospect. And in a sense it is true.

Some of our grosser illusions might be given up quickly, but we have to be separated from the most subtle lies gradually. One way to begin separating ourselves from illusions is to try to amend our lives. A

good manual of conduct—for example, the Sermon on the Mount—might be studied and practiced, especially the hard parts. Of course, our attempts to be good will be miserably unsuccessful. But no matter. That's also a part of rejecting illusion. If we keep trying as hard as we can, new avenues will open up for us. He that seeks finds. One has to believe that this is true. And it is.

Another common error is that somehow we have to make the light shine—that it's up to us; either we do it or it won't be done. Of course, none of us can possibly do that, but we don't have to. When the obstacles, which are elements of our egos, are removed, then the light shines of itself. It's like the sun, only more so. We can't make it shine, or keep it from shining.

We tend to keep thinking that we're alive and that clear spiritual Being is dead, but that is mistaken and foolish. It's alive, and we're dead. We don't put anything into it; it puts everything into us. If only we could abandon ourselves completely and perfectly to that eternally creative Being beyond phenomena! Of course, even the most advanced human spirit cannot entirely become pure power and light. And if we do happen to advance a step, it is easy to overrate our progress, since even the smallest particle of real light is an infinite amount.

To advance spiritually is to give up our own desires, ideas and projects. But giving them up doesn't eliminate such things, it merely purifies and illuminates them. There is an infinite and inexhaustible fund of desires, ideas and projects within each one of us. There has to be. But these human treasures don't belong to our egos, and our egos can't remain in control of them. That would be suicidal. They have to be given up—

that's the point. "One ten thousandth of an inch," says an Eastern proverb, "sets heaven and hell apart."

—Just retched up some of the bitterest substance imaginable. It brought tears to my eyes, and made me sweat and tremble. Will have to remember to remove my upper plate at such times, or out it goes too. Rinsed out my mouth and then drank a few swallows of water, which tasted as sweet as sugar. Then in a few minutes that session was followed by a bowel movement—not large, but much more copious than the preceding ones. These activities should go a long way toward easing my troubled mind.

Had been looking up one of Chuang Tzu's beautiful anecdotes that seems to illustrate the point I had been making.¹⁴ This one is about some wise old buddies who may have been the town fools—but they understood Tao.

When Tseyu fell ill, Tsesze went to see him.

"Truly God is great!" said the sick man. "See how he has doubled me up!"

His back was so hunched his viscera were at the top of his body, his cheeks level with his navel, and his shoulders higher than his neck. His whole organism was deranged, but his mind was as calm as ever. Dragging himself to the well, he said, "Alas that God should have doubled me up like this!"

"Don't you like it?" asked Tsesze.

"Why shouldn't I?" replied Tseyu. "If my right arm should become a cock, then I could herald the dawn. If it should become a sling, I could shoot a bird to broil for dinner. If my buttocks should become wheels, and my spirit a horse, what need would I have of a chariot? I obtained life because it was my time, and now I am parting with it according to Tao. Why, then, should I dislike it?"

By and by, Tsesze fell ill and lay gasping for breath, while his family stood around weeping. Tseyu went to see him, and shouted at the family. "Go away! You are impeding his dissolution!"

Then, leaning against the door, he spoke to his friend, "Truly God is great! I wonder what he will make of you now? Where do you suppose he will send you? Will he make you into a rat's liver or an insect's leg?"

"A son," answered Tsesze, "goes where his parents send him. Suppose the boiling metal in the smelting pot should call out, 'Make me an [Excaliber]'? That metal would be rejected as uncanny. I regard the universe as a smelting pot and the Creator as the master craftsman. Why should I worry where I am sent?"

Then he sank down into a peaceful sleep and woke up very much alive.

Unfortunately, few of us attain such perfect confidence. The reason is that we keep obstacles within us, obstacles we have incorporated into our lives, into our egos, and can't give up.

There is one such obstacle in particular that we choose to overlook. Nevertheless, it seems to me to be profound. One of the greatest obstacles to spiritual perception among us is an impure way of earning our living. Economics is a very important factor in our lives; everyone knows it is. How then can we be so blind as to imagine it to be without spiritual significance? That with whom we have to do is ultimately wise, and nothing can be hidden. If our activities are injuring or oppressing others, we just can't get that kind of baggage through the gate. Oh, yes, maybe a little way, just enough to allow us the chance to amend—no further, and no longer.

An illustration comes to mind. A friend told of attending a meeting once, the purpose of which was to

discuss the causes of war and how they could be eliminated. The conference was held in a sumptuous house, and the high-minded guests were supplied with the most expensive delicacies on gold and silver service. But they needn't have gone far to discover the causes of war in this destitute world. The causes were evident before them, and in fact they themselves were the causes. I can picture similarly well-intentioned people discussing the politics of universal love until the bombs carry us all into oblivion.

Then there is the story of Ebrahim ibn Adham, the wealthy king of Balkh.¹⁵ One night he was awakened by a terrible shaking, like someone stamping on the roof.

"Who's there?" he shouted.

"A friend," came back the reply. "I've lost my camel."

"You fool!" Ebrahim shouted. "Are you looking for your camel on a roof?"

"You fool," was the answer. "Are you looking for God in silk clothing, and lying on a golden bed?"

These words filled him with terror. And a fire blazed up within him that never went out. Eventually he became a great saint, seer and ascetic.

10:25 P.M. Extremely tired, but not in the least sleepy. My arms and legs are quite weak. I interpret this as a gathering of my energies for more important internal work. My colon feels clean and empty, but it never was distressed. However, the stomach and upward are in turmoil, and I expect another go-around of retching at any time. Have left out my teeth, since it may start suddenly.

The doctor on the radio this evening has fasted extremely overweight people for a week at a time. He says many of them really enjoy it because of masochism,

the enjoyment of pain. But why should a week of rest be painful to overstuffed people? No doubt it is actually pleasant.

I must say now that these symptoms are not enjoyable to me. What is pleasant is the hope of being rid of some things that have troubled me for years. And the more effectively I meditate, the more inner turmoil is created. This isn't physically pleasant, but it is rationally satisfying.

Will stay up awhile and wait for action.

Thursday, April 8

9:25 A.M. Bright cool day, no rain. Looks like I may do hard time again today. Don't care about anything except lying still, breathing deeply, and laboring internally.

Threw up more bitter substance, a bright yellow, before going to bed about midnight. Then awake at 1:30, and lay on the couch till 4:30. Had to vomit all the time, but was not able. Drank lots of water, which was hard to force down, but thought it might help expedite matters. Finally tried forcing my finger down my throat. That brought results—a much more diluted material, but a great relief. Vomiting is extremely difficult for many people, but I seem to have a straight shot out. Leaning over puts too much bend and strain on the stomach. Down on my hands and knees over a pan is the preferred position.

Slept well until almost 7:00. Woke with a strange dream—usually I dream very little. I was on a construction job with a contractor I know. But someone else was doing my work, and so I was just in the way. Finally I left, and it was necessary to walk across a place where several streets ran together. The crossing must have been a block wide, with heavy traffic—very difficult. Then, as I walked along, a very distressed voice kept coming from an upper story somewhere.

"Help, help, oh, oh, help, help." Everyone on the street seemed disturbed by the voice, but we couldn't discover where it was coming from.

Very weak and a bit nauseated. More of this retching to come, I'm sure, but not immediately. Will rest now.

If a person's intention and business at hand were merely to survive awhile without food, I doubt if he'd encounter many of my present symptoms. But my objective isn't so simple, the purpose being to eliminate some unknown poisons from my body in the hopes of emerging into a somewhat higher plane of living. So I keep pressing these difficult eliminative processes as hard as possible, hoping that they may help accomplish this objective.

3:15 P.M. Been lying down all day. Real weak. Haven't wanted to do anything but work—work similar to that a feverish person does. But I'm not feverish.

Very pleasant lying in the camper with a couple of windows open, one next to my head. The air comes in cool and soft, cool enough that the heater is turned as low as it will go.

Threw up again shortly after noon. Learning the technique for doing that. When I feel as if I need to vomit, I drink water. Then, after that has settled, I get down on my hands and knees with a pan and induce vomiting with my finger. Usually produce a half pint or so of extremely vile yellow substance. A relief, but it doesn't all come up. And strange to say, this purging is often followed by a bowel movement—not much, but some. Compacted material, not at all loose, but easy to pass. Perhaps a few more rounds and I'll be in better shape.

A domestic problem on the place. We have two geese and a gander. Now is setting time, and both geese

have decided to set in the same place—behind the light pole next to the barn near the camper. It's only a small place, though, and the first has begun to set, while the second still wants to lay eggs in with the first—a strange family triangle which will never work. I've locked the second one in a doghouse nearby, where we'd hoped she'd set, and given her several eggs that I think may be hers. It takes geese about a month to hatch, so they'll be hatching out about the same time. Hope we all have luck.

11:00 P.M. Hardest day so far. Just wanted to lie still, and did most of the day. Stomach-purging is an extremely exhausting process. It makes me weep and sweat. Hope it doesn't go on too long.

Beautiful moonlight night. Lay on the bunk in the camper by the opened window and watched the moon, almost full, till it went out of view overhead. Then lay with the lights off and the moonlight streaming in the windows. Doing hard time physically, but my thoughts aren't in the least morbid or depressed. Thoughts of springtime and beautiful scenes of growing things. A favorable omen, according to *The Secret of the Golden Flower*.

Lots of ideas, but no energy to get up and put them down. Will force myself to do it tomorrow if I am still so weak and nauseated.

Friday, April 9 — Good Friday

8:55 A.M. Beautiful morning. But I'm pretty well dragged out. The stomach problem seems to be over for the time being. The nausea and burning in my throat and trachea are gone, and perhaps there'll be smoother sailing for a while.

Turned in last night about midnight after no success at vomiting. Then after a while I got up and did it. Difficult and exhausting, but effective. Slept fitfully, and not up until about eight. Much better, but feeling the aftermath. The bad mouth is no better, and this is what I now feel sure will be the focus of the fast for me: cleaning the mouth and stomach up a bit.

The view presented concerning meditation is that anyone can reach the Being beyond phenomena. It's not something far away and difficult but is in fact one's most intimate creator and the very basis of our existence, "closer than breathing and nearer than hands and feet." And the nature of our obstacles is that they are internal and self-imposed. If these internal obstacles can be overcome, then, I believe, no external obstacle can prevent us from reaching the goal. It follows from this that it would be a mistake to expect any kind of external assistance to be decisive in overcoming essentially internal obstacles. Outsiders can only help us help ourselves—or hinder us from helping ourselves.

According to Kelpius, the hermit mystic of colonial Pennsylvania, everyone without exception is called to this life of inner prayer. Being learned or having other obvious external advantages doesn't help us, and in fact may very much hinder us. On the other hand, only a few ever come to any clear perception or practice of it. There must be some predetermining factors at work.

A very important factor, of course, is the general social situation within which one happens to live. Things that are socially accepted and supported also tend to be more common and easier to accomplish. But the philosophy and practice of meditation isn't supported by any of the established institutions or traditions in our society. On the other hand, there is an accepted and valuable latitude of freedom afforded in this and other matters. And no previous society has ever offered the scope of information about ideas and practices the world over that we have here today.

The favorable predispositions for meditation are interest, desire, and need; the unfavorable ones are disinterest, lack of desire, and lack of need (feeling satisfied). If, when a person hears of the possibility of reaching a state of being beyond phenomena, he is consumed with interest, wants very urgently to do it, and feels that he absolutely has to do it, then he is also in the proper way of reaching the goal. But if the thing appears ridiculous, then of course there is no possibility. A heated rejection could mean indecision, or even denied acceptance. Disinterest is the furthest from it. Like gold, the possibility is wherever one finds it. Some places are more likely, but the most unlikely places have also produced rich strikes.

Among the obstructions to be considered, as I mentioned before, is whether we have injured, or may right now be injuring others. In order to meditate suc-

cessfully, Milarepa tells us, we must always keep in mind that our ultimate purpose is to benefit others. And whatever merit might be gained through this or other action is to be devoted to the welfare of other people and never to ourselves. It follows from this that if by our lives and actions we are in fact injuring and cursing the lives of others, then we can't expect to meditate very successfully.

Some of the ways in which we curse and injure others are obvious; others are not. The more obvious injuries may be less deadly to us, because it is easier to repent when we can't escape from the knowledge of what we have done. Our unseen depredations may be no worse, but they are more difficult to bring into clear knowledge and repentance. For example, if a man murders a number of innocent persons with a knife, that is spiritually less deadly than to have murdered them from a high-flying plane, or from deep within a missile silo. In either case one carries a terrible weight. But if we have no actual knowledge or perception of what we have done, where is the basis of repentance? The judgement then, as always, perfectly fits the crime because they are merely parts of the same thing—a nameless, faceless, relentless, vague, confused maze from which there is no apparent opening or way of escape.

2:35 P.M. Have been perfectly content to lie quietly on the bunk resting, thinking, and meditating.

If to meditate means to reach that Being which is beyond the phenomenal existence of this world of relative nature, perhaps there are those who might wonder if they haven't done this, or are even presently doing it, without actually being aware of what they've done. This seems as likely as a woman becoming

pregnant, carrying, and delivering a baby without knowing anything about it. In fact, even less likely.

For the human consciousness to contact that Being beyond phenomena is not simply an event, it is *the* event. Our nature immediately recognizes *that* as the one necessary thing, the pearl of great price, the treasure hidden in a field. The experience is self-validating. No one else needs to verify it. One knows immediately. And even if everyone else should maintain otherwise, what of it? As long as one keeps a firm hold on the experience, all those other opinions are really of no consequence.

A tongue, observes the *Dhamma-pada*, recognizes the taste of soup immediately, but a spoon never. My view is that the human consciousness is a famished tongue, and That which is beyond phenomena its most necessary food.

7:00 P.M. There may be those who suppose that when we say meditation reaches the Being beyond phenomena, a conversion experience is referred to. But these two things, although they have certain central elements in common, are not the same thing. To clarify this we might consider the conversion experience.

First it must be said that meditation, or inward prayer, is a completely natural process, although it may be that every natural process has "supernatural" elements and overtones. In any case, inward prayer isn't more "supernatural" than, say, our ordinary physical processes. And the same thing can be said about conversion. It is a natural, and in fact a very common process.

Conversion is a sudden reorientation of life-processes whereby one's ideas, desires, values, and perceptions are quickly reorganized around a new center. This phenomenon of sudden reorientation occurs throughout

nature, and especially among living organisms. Atomic structure is governed by the laws of quantum mechanics, which expresses something similar. Energy levels are always discrete. Thus, a particle can have one energy or another, one location or another, but never anything in between. In between is forbidden; in between doesn't exist. A change is always sudden, never gradual.

Simple mechanical motions such as whirlpools show similar tendencies. They can go either right or left, and a very small force, properly applied, can often reverse them. But human beings afford the clearest examples of this quanta principle at work throughout nature. There have been many different kinds of conversions among humans—sudden shifts, that is, in the centers of value and activity. They cover the entire range of human ideas and experience. There are political and scientific as well as religious conversions—some for the better and some for the worse, since the shift can be either upward or downward in a moral or ethical sense. A confirmed addict can give up drugs quickly, or a non-addict can just as quickly become hooked. Either way has tremendous long-range implications.

Some of the most remarkable and interesting cases of sudden conversion happened on the wider stage of human society. Old established scientific, religious, political, and economic ideas and value patterns have been overthrown with a suddenness that couldn't have been imagined and replaced by altogether new and different frames of reference, which have then proceeded outward with evangelical enthusiasm. The spread of Christianity, Islam, the French and Russian revolutions, and the overthrow of classical physics are examples.

Even more significant and interesting, it seems to me, is the same phenomenon on an even larger scale. The coming of technology and the modern age is a case in

point. When considered against the scale of history, the scientific and technical revolution has occurred almost instantaneously. And the heart of humanity was certainly converted—no doubt of it. Not 100 percent of course, but 100 percent is only a hoped for and never a real conversion value.

It is obvious to whomever looks closely at the situation that a quantum gap exists between the psyches of modern and pre-modern men. We can't step into their thoughts, their souls, nor they into ours. A whole new and unsuspected vein of human abilities and possibilities has been laid open and diligently exploited—and the ancient axioms and precepts have been buried and forgotten. And we even forget that we have forgotten.

Some of the implications of this for the development of the future are most intriguing. Herman Kahn and other futurists have developed scenarios of what they think the future could be like. But their projections all seem incredible. What they fail to appreciate is the inner dynamics of nature and history and the vast range of potentialities latent in the human spirit. They hesitate, afraid to look squarely at death—the death of cultures, civilizations, species, as well as their own. What lies beyond death?

Let me develop a scenario that seems probable. The rich vein of social, psychological, philosophical, religious, and physical resources that modern technology has exploited so ruthlessly looks like it's beginning to play out. There is all kinds of evidence to support this perception, and in addition many people feel it to be true. But what then? What next? How can modern man's incredible motion and energy ever be stopped?

The really terrifying thing facing humanity is nuclear war. It is so horrible men are unable to face it. The

possibility is so horrible that it just couldn't exist. It has to be impossible. It simply couldn't happen. But if we look at the matter candidly, we can see that it is possible. We can see that it is not only possible but also probable. And not only probable, it may be inescapable. The trouble is, as Freud observed, no one can imagine his own death. And the same must be true of civilizations.

There are countless thousands of nuclear weapons now stockpiled in at least five nations, not to mention their many allies. With the proliferation of nuclear technology and the world-wide production of vast quantities of fissionable material, there will soon be dozens of nations, not to mention international or sub-national groups or gangs, with nuclear capability. (The actual bomb-mechanics are quite simple. It's really no big deal, sir.) And it can be assumed that the delivery of bombs on target would be more imaginative and daring than expensive. Those who hope that the size and spread of nuclear bombs can be controlled simply have no conception of the insurmountable difficulties that effective control would involve. And if force were to be used to control them, that in itself would be sufficient cause for their use.

Now, consider the tensions and implacable hatreds throughout the world, which are constantly growing rather than lessening. In the light of past experience, and of the present very obvious political and emotional demands being made everywhere, can we really believe that none of those weapons will be used in anger? Would we, America, for example, use them? Of course we would. There is no doubt about that. We already have used them, and on an enemy who was clearly beaten and looking for an honorable way to surrender. What would we do in a real bind where our back was

against the wall and our very existence was at stake? What would other nations do in the same situation?

A nuclear war might not be the end of history, or of life on the planet—certainly not immediately. There could be a still deeper vein of rich human material to tap. And it is beginning to appear that there is.

A nuclear war would cut humanity to some unknown fraction of its present size. It could poison much of the earth and make many forms of life, including man, sterile. But in spite of this, or because of it, an altogether new age might be born. In that case, humanity would undergo a deep conversion, a rapid shift of value and perception. Conditions would be ripe to allow this to take place more rapidly than such changes have ever taken place before.

Here is a sketch of my scenario for the near future: A new age in which present-day ideas would be completely foreign, almost unthinkable. Its genius wouldn't be technical, but social and psychic. It would produce the most diverse illustrations of human nature possible—the very best along with the very worst. The world would be united politically. Organization and obedience would be the keynotes, freedom and individuality rooted out. This would be the ultimate flowering of human history, the most amazing age ever known.

It would develop very rapidly and be expected to last forever. But it would fade just as rapidly and dramatically, merely a brief opening so that all the contents of the human heart and mind could be known historically.

And then? Then something better. Far better. That for which the whole creation groans and labors together in pain until then—the revealing of the sons of men.

10:50 P.M. An almost full moon. Laid on the bunk for hours in the moonlight. My hopes for being done with this stomach matter may have been premature. Some nausea and indications that this respite may have been only a brief pause between rounds.

Saturday, April 10

8:00 A.M. A warm spring day. High scattered cloudiness. The expected stomach nausea hasn't developed. Feeling much better, especially my morale.

An interesting insight into myself this morning, something that convinces me even more firmly of the value of fasting. And when I report it I hope it may also help to convince others.

The miserable mouth and constant salivation has been the most disagreeable symptom so far. It has been quite remarkable. I judge the discharge to be about a half ounce per hour, and sometimes more. In some way this seemed to be connected with a verbal uncleanness, but just how I couldn't determine. I have my own view of myself, as everyone does. But one's own view may not be very objective, or anything at all like what others see. I see myself as not overly talkative, in most situations somewhat reticent, but able to converse easily with people in quite different social situations. There is a rather obvious exception to my courtesy, however. When I meet what seem to be pompous self-important people who overawe others by expounding on subjects of deep interest to me, but which I think they know very little about, then I tend to dominate the situation and strike for blood—no doubt about it, and no quarter given.

It had seemed to me that this might be the source of my verbal uncleanness. But now I am sure it is something quite different and also deeper than that. Was extremely tired last night, and also sleepy, but unable to sleep because of this steady flow of saliva to be gotten rid of. It just keeps pouring into my mouth—very vile. Of course, I've been racking my brain trying to discover the cause and what might be done to prevent it.

I've also noticed that there have been times when it stops and I have been able to sleep well. Last night it was even worse than usual, and at the same time I noticed a stream of inane conversations coursing through my mind. They didn't seem particularly good or bad, but simply pointless.

Analyzing the situation, I came to the insight that my problem may in fact be this almost steady inner verbalization at an almost unconscious level. For my own good as well as those around me I'll have to practice being quiet. Perhaps my spiritual neighbors know me as a very loquacious fellow, one who might do all right if only he'd shut up for a while—or oftener.

During the last few hours I've found that the saliva flow is directly related to this internal talkativeness. Of course, such verbalization is merely a form of thought—by no means the superior form, but one to which I am certainly addicted, as are most men and women with intellectual pretensions. There is an excellent illustration in scripture where Jacob confers his last blessing and prophecy on his twelve sons. Naphtali was the brilliant intellectual of the lot, “a leaping deer, providing beautiful words.” A poet no doubt—deceitful as hell.

So I feel that this particular insight into myself could be worth the whole price of the fast. I'm sure it's true, and have no idea how it might have been arrived at otherwise. Now to put that insight into practice. It

won't be easy. Habits of years' standing aren't easily changed. I'll have to work at it. Don't know exactly how it will affect my various writing projects and ambitions. Change them, no doubt. Less volume and more weight, I would hope.

7:20 P.M. Night before Easter. The night "Christ lay in bonds of death." Been watching the full moon rise out of the mountains—very beautiful.

Had to drive to town today, about 40 miles round trip. Tired, but less so than I had feared. Got a lot of garden seed—about that time. I'll be eager for fresh things when they're ready, but won't be much help putting the garden out. Our garden is large, about a third of an acre. Been helping our boy get started plowing it. He's plowing right now by moonlight. A pleasant job.

While we are considering the subject of conversion, it might be asked whether or not that should be the first and central concern of spiritual experience, as it is in so much Christian philosophy and practice. My own view is that it shouldn't. It seems to me that the central point should be the continual practice of inward prayer.

Not that conversions haven't an irreplaceable value. Most, but possibly not all, advocates of deep meditation have had profound conversion experiences. But as the primary criterion of spiritual value the conversion experience has several shortcomings. For one thing, not everyone may be capable of it. Some people's psyches may not be able to shift gears so suddenly. Second, conversion is only a one-time, or at most a several-time experience. Third, its significance isn't always as obvious as it is generally thought to be. There can be a conversion to evil, or to good, or to intermediate values.

And fourth, conversion isn't always self-validating. It usually relies on some sort of practice or tradition to validate it. This external dependency may be hidden or overlooked, but it is almost always there.

The practice of inward prayer, on the other hand, is, I believe, an experience more open to everyone. It doesn't strike unpredictably or accidentally, like lightning, but is a steady everyday experience that can be continually tested. It gradually excludes evil usages and over the long run is hardly open to misinterpretation. It doesn't rely on any tradition for its validity, but creates its own validity as it goes along. When it is practiced, the ideas of profit or loss, reward or punishment, saved or not saved recede into their proper background.

Whoever continually dwells in the secret place of the Most High can say with the assurance of Emily Dickinson:

"So I'm not going to heaven at last,
I'm going all along."

10:30 P.M. Hard day. Tired, nauseated, and nervously spent. Remembered a Hasidic precept that it is sinful to entertain sad spirits. So I'm trying to drive them away and invite some cheerful ones instead.

Celebrating the coming holiday by listening to Heinrich Schütz's *The Resurrection*. Excellent. Nothing in English even approaches it. Struck with the fact that Jesus' view of those events was that they were natural, immediate, obvious, predictable, and physical, and not some faraway misty supernatural abstractions as the obfuscators picture them.

The thought in it that seems to speak most im-

mediately to my situation is that expressed at Emmaus: Please, sir, stay with us here. For see, the day is far gone, and it will soon be night.

11:00 And to bed.

Sunday, April 11

Easter Sunday. 1:15 P.M. Rested well last night and have been quite active all day. Attended church, and we're expecting company for Easter dinner—which I hope they'll enjoy without me. Beautiful day, warm and gusty.

Just now weighed at 147, but with lighter shoes. Have lost 23 or 24 pounds by the nineteenth day. Not too noticeable in my face—mostly in my arms and legs. My hands look quite pale and thin. Still have lots of physical reserves, but, to put it mildly, they aren't eager to be pressed into service. It can be done, and was done today, but I'm sure it will cost a good bit of mental, emotional, and physical anguish. Sort of like kicking drugs or nicotine—it hurts, but it won't kill us.

Some of the seedling apricots nearby are beginning to bloom. I've got a nice sweet-smelling apricot sprig here beside me, and should have them from now on to brighten the atmosphere.

Been reading about some of the Hasidic masters. Their joy and exuberance is a tonic I'll no doubt be needing. Must rest now at last.

6:20 P.M. My purpose in attempting to write down the experience of this fast was not only to offer some small amount of information about the technique of

fasting, but, more important, to put down a few observations about the practice of meditation which might be helpful to a reader.

We've been skirting all around the heart of the subject, but soon we'll have to dive right into the center of it. Before trying to do that, however, several possible misconceptions might be considered briefly.

The purpose of meditation, we have said, is to reach consciously that which is beyond phenomena. This, obviously, is something each person has to do for himself. No one can do it for anyone else. And no one's experience is valid for anyone else. If that which is beyond phenomena were said to be like this or like that, such a statement would have to be wrong. Humans are infinitely diverse, and *That* is infinitely malleable. It fits everyone perfectly, but no two people alike. Therefore it would be an error to try to fit anyone's experience into a particular pattern. It would have to be wrong. One would then be looking for, and finding, a pattern. But a pattern is a phenomenal thing and not what one should be looking for at all; the non-phenomenal is non-patterned. So only general instructions can be given. Words are slippery tools—and written ones may be even worse.

The anonymous author of the fourteenth-century English classic, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, makes a number of acute and even humorous comments on this point. This is an excellently instructive treatise by the way, which I have read dozens of times, and which has climbed Long's Peak with me.

Five hundred years or so ago, a successful contemplative held a high place in the general social esteem. So becoming a contemplative was an ambitious thing to do—ambition in its baldest perspective. (This is hardly a hazard today.) We are told that when such

aspirants heard the word "in," they kept straining to reverse their eyeballs and general physiognomy until they got into a terrible shape. The word "up" strained them in a similarly ridiculous manner. They expected to climb into heaven above the stars somewhere in order to see God seated on his throne there, or to talk with angels, etc., etc. Some sat all day "gaping with opened mouths as though to catch flies," hoping manna might fall.

The trouble in all such cases is that what is said to be beyond phenomena isn't really thought of as being beyond phenomena at all.

11:30 P.M. A long tiring day with little rest. But have felt pretty good. When very tired I also feel a bit nauseated. I retch, but ineffectively. Surprising results just a few minutes ago, however. Not a pleasant experience but quite a relief to get rid of that extremely bitter substance. Hope to sleep well tonight.

Listening to Schütz again. Not much opportunity for writing today—but ideas. They'll wait till tomorrow. I may be tiring a little intellectually—not for thinking, but for writing. It's something of a chore, not bad, but resting is so much nicer. I'll push myself to it if necessary.

11:40 To bed.

Monday, April 12

8:05 A.M. Beautiful day. Neighbors out working ground with tractors. Slept well. About five hours a day seems to be the requirement. Try to rest during the day but never sleep. Riding along easily. Some giddiness if I stand up quickly, but it soon passes. The lack of food in itself isn't hard to take, or even unpleasant. It's the secondary symptoms that are a bit difficult—the fairly frequent nausea, the miserable mouth, and something that might best be described as a nervous depletion. It takes an act of will to continue drawing up fresh resources. There is also a weakness and tiredness, but it isn't too unpleasant.

The reader might wonder at my apparent enthusiasm for retching and vomiting. In itself, of course, it isn't easy or entertaining. But I feel that it is getting rid of substances that have given and could continue to give me lots of grief. I remember quite clearly, on my other long fast, this intense bitterness in the depths of my stomach. It seemed to be the immediate thing that was oppressing me and bringing me down to the earth.

At the time, it seemed that if only this stomach problem could be gotten rid of, I might accomplish my purpose. But it couldn't be gotten rid of no matter how hard I tried. The bad mouth and the constant salivation were with me then too. Both these things de-

veloped near the end of the fast and gave me so much trouble that I felt they represented whatever factors defeated me.

But now they've developed quite early. And with reserves left to go on for perhaps several weeks rather easily, it seems they might well be overcome. In other words, I feel a long way further up the mountain now than then, and have much stronger hopes for a successful finish.

The implications, for me, of this extremely intense bitterness at what seems to be the very root of my being, is without doubt colored by my absorption in Jacob Boehme's philosophy. In his view, there are two primary poles, or forces, continually at work in nature. One is the force of attraction; the other, the force of repulsion. The first is hard, dark, compressive, conservative, short-sighted, and sour. The second is the mobile, raging, painful essence that tries to break loose from its hard enclosure. That's the bitter. These two are perfect enemies. Yet they are absolutely necessary to each other. Neither could exist without the other.

I happen to have been taken primarily from the latter, the bitter quality. That quality has fine possibilities—as well as its peculiar shortcomings. At any rate, I recognize my innermost essences as being composed of these extremely bitter tendencies. However, to become really worthwhile they'll have to be mollified, converted, and transmuted. Then they might become something quite excellent. And that's why I'm so happy to vomit up these terribly bitter substances. I feel that they are being worked over deep within me and perhaps converted, or transmuted.

There is a beautiful figure of this in Scripture. It is that of the tomb in which the patriarchs and their wives were buried. For even Abraham had to struggle against

bitterness until finally he could purchase a burying place for himself and his family. And it was the only ground he ever owned—Machpelah, the Double Cave, or the Two-fold Pit. Like the garden of Eden, its physical location has never been found, nor will it.

It is located eastward, beyond Bitterness, at the end of the field of Dust. Abraham purchased it from Dust, one of the children of Trembling—for a price, four hundred pieces of silver, current money with the merchant. In other words, the price he paid was this whole phenomenal world, however it stands at the date of purchase. Abraham paid that and made the title sure for himself and for his children in the presence of all those who went in and out through the gate of the city.

And there, together with Father Abraham and his children, is the only right and proper place for all humans to be buried. Machpelah, the Double Cave, between heaven and earth, at the end of the field of Dust, eastward of Bitterness.

11:25 A.M. It would be impossible to overemphasize the truth that all life and value proceeds from the non-phenomenal, which is beyond nature, and *never* from the polarized relative fields of phenomena that make up the body of nature. This is the essential point of conflict within and everywhere around us. If we can grasp this point clearly, then we are started on our way. And if we could make full use of it, we'd be something altogether different than we are now.

Of course, it can never be made full use of. If that could happen, then we would be completely beyond nature, which is impossible, and also not desirable. The non-phenomenal loves phenomenal nature—it loves it, desires it, labors incessantly for it, sacrifices itself for it. Finally, we must suppose that, in some profound way

beyond understanding, God needs the world of nature. That which is perfect, pure, and holy needs this that is so weak, confused, soiled, and lost.

What this means is that the Deity beyond nature, who is pure Spirit and nature's Creator, not only loves each infinitesimal aspect of nature, but also needs human beings to be His instruments for bringing each of these infinitely various aspects of nature into its proper fulfillment and perfection. This, as I see it, is the purpose of humanity—to dress and keep God's garden. This labor is infinitely complex and difficult, requiring infinite skill and intelligence. It is infinitely delightful and satisfying—and there is an infinite time in which to do it.

It follows from this view that the most spiritually advanced person would be merely a receptacle for that Life and Wisdom which is beyond phenomena—a shell, a husk, but an absolutely necessary shell and husk without which Wisdom couldn't work in nature. So the goal isn't to eliminate our humanity but to realize its infinite potentialities. Infinite just so long as we immerse ourselves in that which is infinite, and drink deeply and steadily from that eternal wellspring of light and life within us.

10:20 P.M. 50° and breezy. Went to Grand Junction this afternoon on family business. Drove over Grand Mesa. Very beautiful but extremely tiring. I drove only part of the way. A 150-mile trip; took five hours in all. Arrived home perfectly exhausted. Nothing like that again until after the fast is broken.

Stretched out motionless on the bunk after returning. Watched the moon rise about nine o'clock. A strange and awesome thing. One waits and waits. The sky

brightens slightly. Then it begins, increasing from a tiny point of light until finally the moon frees itself from the earth and sails majestically through the sky.

10:30 To bed and, I hope, a sound sleep.

Tuesday, April 13

Twenty-first day of the fast.

8:50 A.M. Bright cool morning. Birds singing. Rested well, but took a long time getting to sleep and lay awake a long time before getting up. Content to just rest. Dressing and walking out to the camper is becoming a bit of a chore. Have given up feeding hay or anything strenuous. Could still do it, but need that strength for more worthwhile things.

Aside from being weak and tired, I am very often nauseated. This seems to come from the bitter substances being poured into my stomach. Been drinking more water than I really want, which helps to back-flush my stomach, a tiring and unpleasant operation—but effective. It relieves the nausea and gets rid of the uneasy stomach. The urine is still very dark, but easy.

There is also a slight aching throughout my whole body. Very similar to what one feels the day after an unusual amount of exercise. Not unpleasant really; just an awareness of cleanup work being done within one's tissues.

A woodpecker has been here the last few days—a pleasing sound hammering on the trees. But just now

he has begun rapping on the camper—some exposed wood behind the cab about two feet from where I am writing. A fruitless project, I fear. Slipped outside quietly to watch him, but he flew away. A beautiful reddish-winged fellow with a brilliant head. Hope he decides to stay with us. The pond is an attraction to birds on this desert mesa.

To continue with the subject of meditation, it can be said that consciousness has only two possibilities. There are forms of consciousness arising from attachment to phenomena, and there are forms of consciousness arising from attachment to That which is non-phenomenal. The first form of consciousness is locked inevitably in the process of running down and dying, because it is only able to sustain itself by drawing up nourishment from external sources.

On the other hand, the true Source of all life and consciousness, which is non-phenomenal, needs the world of phenomena in order to make itself objective, firm, beautiful, and physically existent. So all of nature, anything that exists physically, is the result of this interaction between the non-phenomenal and phenomena.

“By letting our minds dwell on that which is good,” said the Sixth Patriarch of Zen, “paradise becomes manifest. And by letting the mind dwell on evil, hells arise. Bodhisattvas are compassionate thoughts made manifest. The various heavens are projections of wisdom, and the underworlds are the transformations of ignorance and infatuation. Numberless indeed are the transformations of Mind-essence.”

The point of meditation, therefore, is to direct the innermost center of the mind toward that which is pure—non-phenomenal—and away from that which is

impure—the merely phenomenal. This, of course, is difficult to do, especially in the beginning.

The part of us that must be redirected is the will, which is the innermost essence of the person. Just what will is is impossible to say. "Will" is merely a word used to point to something. At any rate, our "will" is extremely complex, tremendously effective, divided, bound by habit, and not easily redirected. But there is something else within us that is very easily directed. That is the imagination. Boehme calls it the "flying point."

So the first and easiest thing to redirect is the imagination. It should never under any circumstances be allowed to dwell deliciously on the contemplation of evil things. Eventually, we follow wherever our imaginations lead us. Thus, if our imaginations are allowed to dwell on lusts, hatreds, murders, etc., then we can expect ourselves to become the living embodiments of such things. But if our imaginations can be continually directed toward purity, and ultimately toward That which is absolutely pure—the non-phenomenal—then our fate and destiny will improve.

A word here might be said about the term "ignorance." Throughout Eastern scriptures "ignorance" is held to be the primary cause, and indeed the very root source, of every form of evil and suffering among men and throughout all nature. But this "ignorance" isn't a failure of education. It isn't due to our lack of intelligence. And having a perfect knowledge of any number of facts can't possibly cure it.

"Ignorance," explained Patanjali, the classical Indian authority on Yoga, "is taking the non-eternal, the impure, the painful, the non-Self, to be the eternal, the pure, the happy, and the Atman, or Self."

In other words, ignorance, understood in its philo-

sophical sense, has nothing to do with a knowledge of facts. Rather, such knowledge tends to deepen and strengthen ignorance. Ignorance is simply mistaking the impure for the pure—the phenomenal for the non-phenomenal.

2:20 P.M. But where, Boehme was asked, is the place God meets man and lives in him?

"It is," he replied, "the resigned and naked ground of a soul to which nothing sticks." Few find that place because we all tend to look for God in something or other—that is, in some sort of phenomena.

This, of course, is idolatry—in fact, the ultimate idolatry of which everyone is guilty. When we hold some phenomenal thing to be God, and enthrone that in the center of our will, where God alone should be, then we are idolators. Therefore, what is required of us is that we displace these phenomenal things that are central in our mind, will, and imagination, and which we are presently worshiping, and allow God—the true God, who is a spirit that no man has ever seen at any time—to rule there instead.

But all these things are extremely dear to us, and we find it very hard to give them up. This, of course, is the very essence of man's fall as it is represented in scripture. Adam chose to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and this immediately aroused within him a lust for the world. If man's innermost mind had remained fixed on God, the non-phenomenal, his fate would have been different. But we've left that place where our mind and will should remain centered and have chosen instead to experience the animal life of this world—the situation we are all now currently enjoying.

There are only these two choices. And as long as our

most vital will and consciousness clings to the elements of the world, we won't be able to discover God. But if this clinging is abandoned in some area, then God's presence becomes revealed in that naked and abandoned ground within us.

A little observation of ourselves and of others shows how very difficult it is to do this. Everyone almost without exception imagines that his temporal and eternal welfare depends on receiving something—something more, greater, bigger, better, and more enduring than what he already has. Maybe we don't know what that "more" is, but we are absolutely certain that it is necessary to us, and that without it we can never be happy. Only saints believe their welfare depends on their giving up something.

And this is how heaven, if there is a heaven, is pictured. It is a place of unlimited indulgence, where the greatest possible indulgence is not only tolerated, but in fact encouraged. Isn't that the picture?

Actually, however, these are the basic conditions of hell—although the relentless integrity built into nature soon puts an end to such pointless squandering of her precious resources.

In this respect we might consider the idea of Nirvana. Westerners, and perhaps even some easterners, have a remarkably obtuse understanding of this. It is generally imagined that Nirvana implies an absolute and complete cessation of life. What the greatest eastern sages struggled for lifetimes to attain, most westerners suppose they can accomplish with a single shotgun blast to the head.

This idea is so incredibly wrong, one would think it might occur to scholars and educated people. The gift of life in a human form is and has always been regarded as a supreme and never-to-be-wasted privilege

and opportunity. To utilize it correctly is certainly not to just snuff it out.

The reason Nirvana is misunderstood is that deluded persons suppose the world of phenomena to be everything, all there is. And the Being that is forever beyond phenomena is thought to be completely worthless and non-existent.

But the goal of human life is to fix the desire, will, thought, intelligence, and consciousness wholly and completely on That Being, rather than on phenomena. This is what it means to attain Nirvana. Then the whole field of one's being, body, mind, will, consciousness, and spirit can become completely suffused with That. If this were done, men would take on infinite and immutable qualities. Then from that secure center, Nirvana, would flow out streams of life-supporting power, wisdom, compassion, and bliss.

10:15 P.M. A long weary day, and dead tired. Perhaps paying for overexertion yesterday and Sunday. I'll not do that again. But I feel I'm making progress. The bitterness in my stomach may be slowly breaking up and in the process of being eliminated. I sense it is extremely hostile to my spiritual and physical welfare.

The camper makes a fine cave—secluded, quiet and comfortable. Everything I need, and no heat or cold problem. Can lay on the bunk next to the opened window, breathing the cool air and watching the trees, birds, and mountains of these beautiful spring days. Or look out into the night and the stars.

Floodwater tonight. A lot of melt off the mountain, and the creek is probably roaring—several miles away. Our ditch has water in it, and our high-school boy is out spreading it around. Doing it on his motorbike,

which has a light and must be more fun. Irrigating has always been my job, and it is also quite pleasant. But he'll have to do it—for several weeks anyway. Completely beyond me now.

Will get ready to turn in soon.

Wednesday, April 14

8:05 A.M. Warm cloudy day. All the irrigation ditches full of spring melt off the mountain. Slept fitfully. A long night, but don't feel too bad now.

When we consider meditation and the possibility of consciously reaching the Being beyond phenomena, there are sure to be those who might be attracted to that undertaking but are held back by the thought that this is only for some especially righteous sort of person. Maybe some saints could do it; but we aren't saints, nor have we seen or heard of any lately.

There could be no greater error than to suppose that only some uniquely virtuous or perfected men and women are called or are capable of doing this. If anything, the very opposite might be true.

That Being is a tremendously irresistible life, likened in scripture to a consuming fire. In the presence of that awesome holiness, all of our presumed virtues are not remarkably distinguishable from our faults. Both miss the mark so far.

That eternal and infinite Being has an unimaginably infinite and powerful love for the phenomenal world of nature which He has created. That love is directed toward every part of nature, but especially toward human beings, since they are the keystone in this particular area of nature. That love is directed toward the

evil as well as the good. In fact, it might even be said that God's love is directed even more toward the evil.

The truth is that the hard, harsh, violent, willful, and uncontrollable aspects of nature actually reflect its superior aspects. Unfortunately, the gold's stuck so hard in the ore that it is extremely difficult, sometimes practically impossible, to free it. But if these worst elements can be freed and immersed in that eternal consuming fire and light, then they are superior, the most excellent substance possible, shining with unsurpassed brilliance and power.

Hidden in the greatest poison, Boehme tells us, is also the greatest virtue. Making this virtue manifest doesn't require the abandonment of the poison's true nature, but only the transmutation that comes from touching true Being. Do we suppose our dirt is going to soil God? Rather, it is like grabbing hold of a high-voltage line. Something will happen. True, a part of our nature will die, but we will be well rid of that. And another part will revive out of death, much to our delight and surprise.

So we should realize that the Creator is even more attracted to sinful and abandoned persons. Jesus saw this quite clearly. The obstacles we have imposed on ourselves don't exist on the side of Being. Whoever touches That is purified by fire. And the slag and cinders of our old worthless life become the elemental material from which the eternal light shines.

9:30 A.M. Walked out to the front field to see where our irrigation water was going. A few hundred yards' walk and some shoveling. Not eager to spend any more energy than necessary.

Although I am rather weak, often nauseated, have a terrible mouth and a very bitter stomach, neverthe-

less my thoughts haven't been morbid or depressed. I see the grass and flowers springing up out of the sweet-smelling earth, the trees leafing out and blossoming, the birds singing cheerfully, and feel that this is all very good. It is not only delightful to itself and to me, but also profoundly pleasing and delightful to its Creator.

4:45 P.M. It cannot be too strongly recommended that fasting of any duration be undertaken under the supervision of an experienced person. Not only are there many aspects of the process to be understood, but it is also immeasurably helpful to feel a firmer hand on the rudder during various crises that arise. For the general weakness of body is accompanied, at least occasionally, by a similar weakness of will, courage, and intellect.

Slipped into a bit of a tailspin this afternoon, during which a firm hand would have been of considerable help. I feel that I've quite a lot of experience and also understand what I'm doing fairly well. But over and above this there is the occasional need for assurance and encouragement, which can become extremely, perhaps desperately, acute.

One needs continually to call up new reserves from within himself. But this isn't always easy to do when one's physical, mental and emotional powers all seem to be sinking into a deep slough.

7:45 P.M. Just weighed in at 146. Dropped about 27 pounds in twenty-two days. Seem to be slowing a bit mentally. Writing isn't really difficult, but it's hard to put myself to it. Scanned a news magazine today (a simple and regular activity) and found it something of a task. Interest seems to be narrowing down to my own private affairs.

There were various abstruse subjects I had thought

I'd consider during the fast, but they are far from my mind now. I seem to be busy with my own internal adjustment to the world. However, this may take on broader implications as the fast deepens. I'm sure it will.

The constant salivation continues. Perhaps a bit lighter. Remarkable. My mouth and stomach are the two points of cleansing—probably the weakest parts of me, and the most in need of recreation.

10:15 P.M. Tired and exhausted. Slightly nauseated much of the time, which obviously comes from my bitter and turbulent stomach. But purging it seems to help. Hope there is an end of it soon—at least before the end of the fast. A very weakening process.

A strange phenomenon. Red livid welts across my stomach and chest. But apparently these are from rubbing myself vigorously with a towel. If I rub a spot firmly, it remains livid for ten minutes or so. But not on my arms or legs.

Thursday, April 15

8:10 A.M. Didn't sleep much, just part-way dozed off occasionally. Entertained strange semi-dreams all night long. The first part of the night I kept thinking of all the ramifications of the idea that speech should be sung, and in close rhythms and rhymes. It seemed extremely worthwhile and important at the moment. The language used seemed to be different from ordinary speech, but quite meaningful. I could never catch just what it was.

Got up at 2 A.M. and retched up some more vile stomach contents, which put me at ease for a while again.

Then began a similar line of semi-conscious thought, considering that all speech must be perfectly honest. This notion also seemed to make a great difference in what is said and how one says it. Both of these ideas seemed really great so long as I was semi-conscious, but with the return of my critical faculties they sort of faded away. Whether they represented something too profound for me to grasp, or merely a dream-world that comes from a certain lessening of one's humanity, isn't easy to say. Probably the latter. I'll think about that. Obviously, the realms of human fantasy are boundless.

Feel fair. Am rather sure that most of my inner tensions, discouragement, and disheartenment come from this bitterness that causes my nausea. Hope it can be gotten rid of.

9:25 A.M. It seems clear to me now that my mouth and stomach, and whatever they represent, are the essential points of conflict. It was the same during my other long fast, although others would of course have altogether different experiences. The terrible bitterness in the pit of my stomach just couldn't be overcome no matter how hard I tried, or at least it seemed so at the time.

And that, I remember, is what defeated me, so that I was forced to leave the field in almost total disarray. There was also this mouth thing, giving the same or possibly worse trouble. Neither could be gotten rid of.

And I remember that they even stayed with me some time after the fast had been broken, making food somewhat disgusting and disagreeable. Maybe I lacked the nerve and courage to hold on long enough. But I hope not to make the same error again. I'll just have to tie a knot in the end of my rope and hang on till the thing is done with. Otherwise, I'm sure the whole trip will have been of no account and even less than worthless. It might leave me in a far worse condition than when I began. That's why I'm so eager to rinse this bitter substance from my stomach.

It seems to be coming up little by little. But always there's some left. Happy day when there isn't any more!

12:30 P.M. It seems remarkable that, of all places to drill, my woodpecker friend should have chosen a place on the camper next to where I write and rest.

He's working on enlarging a crack, and even the paint doesn't seem to deter him. Wonder what he expects to find? Beneath that crack is another inch of wood, then building paper, then celotex. Maybe he'll come right on in.

The damage to the camper is negligible, and I'm more than pleased with his company. Perhaps like Elijah's raven. Have tiptoed out several times to see him at work, but he always flies up into a nearby cottonwood tree. And I've tried rapping from inside, perhaps to communicate. But that doesn't seem to deter him in the least.

A political impression of the last several days from one who is unpolitical by inclination and also by philosophy. It may or may not be valid; in any case, it requires a lot more thought. I'll record it:

The accelerating trend everywhere toward totalitarianism, which is extremely repugnant and distressing to me, won't be reversed. It's as inevitable as the sun rising. In view of this, the course of wisdom is not to resist it directly. To do that would have no preventative effect whatever, and would in fact only bring out and exaggerate its worst and most oppressive features. Rather, the thing to do is to try and soften its harshness, and to work constantly to relieve and to retrieve, insofar as possible, those who happen to get caught up in the machinery.

2:15 P.M. The fact of God's special love toward worldly men and women is illustrated in a remarkable story in scripture. It is about when it came time for Isaac to confer the blessing of Abraham on one of his twin sons.

There are many strange and enlightening aspects to

this story, but at the moment we shall consider only one of them. The parents, Isaac and Rebekah, stand here as a figure of the deity, the Being beyond the phenomenal world of nature. Their children, Jacob and Esau, are men.

Each pair, we might notice, has a double aspect. Isaac represents God's tremendous love and desire for nature, and Rebekah represents the wisdom within that love. Love, as it should be, is male; and wisdom, of course, is female. The twins, deadly rivals, represent the division between man's worldly and spiritual natures that goes to the very center of our humanity. Esau is the man of the field, the hunter, the active worldly man. And Jacob is the contemplative, whose sole work, apparently, was to prepare some kind of red stuff that could be used for food. But the thing for us to notice is that Isaac, God's desire toward nature, which in this figure has the power and authority, prefers Esau—because he enjoys the fruits of Esau's hunting.

So it would be a great error to suppose that God loves worldly or evil persons any less than the presumably virtuous ones. If anything, the opposite might be closer to the truth.

Extremely evil and poisonous things, we have said, may be essentially higher quality materials. But they are stuck so hard in the illusions of phenomena they can't catch the light that would make their quality become apparent. In themselves alone, as with everything else in nature, they remain crude and relatively worthless.

6:40 P.M. Wrong attitudes and bad or evil habits have a deadly effect on man's spiritual life and aspirations. In general, these habits can be compared to weeds. Weeds not only absorb the necessary plant

nourishment, moisture and sunlight, they are also believed to excrete poisons that prevent other plants from growing. The harmfulness of weeds depends on many factors. Some weeds are small and some are large. Some are deep-rooted, others shallow-rooted; some more and some less prolific. And some kinds of weeds are more harmful to the plants men find useful. A great deal also depends on the size and maturity of what one is trying to cultivate. When plants are small and tender, it is absolutely essential that they be cleanly cultivated. A few weeds at that stage can choke them out.

But after plants have attained maturity the weed problem isn't critical, although they are harmful even at that stage. Young, tender plants just springing out of the ground can be easily overwhelmed by a few small weeds. But powerful growths, such as old oak trees, aren't injured in the slightest by the presence of weeds. Their presence kills weeds.

Or think of the Burning Ones whom Isaiah saw in his great temple vision. The evils that would overwhelm us wouldn't touch them. One simple offhand glance from one of them in a tempter's direction would stretch him (or her) absolutely prone. And if the tempter ever recovered from the shock, he'd be extremely careful never to allow himself to get into such a hazardous position again. Such strength of resistance has to come out of long and difficult experience.

10:55 P.M. Steep all the way now. Am staying tonight in the camper. May be less strain on me and on the family. It seems as though I'm dragging a corpse around. But I know this corruptible body is also the body of the infinite bliss transformations.

Meadow-down is not distressed
For a rainbow footing it,
Nor man for his bones risen.

Don't expect to sleep much tonight. May have to climb heavily every step of the way here. Thin air, and maybe static. Had better pay attention and not fall.

Friday, April 16

9:55 A.M. Spent last night in the camper—easier and more convenient. Got to wondering about my heater and whether some of my symptoms had another source. This morning a friend (whom I work with) and I took it apart and checked the heat-exchanger and every joint. We also extended the flue so wind can't give it a backdraft. Had wondered if some of my nausea was simply from flue gas. But I'm convinced it wasn't—line, heater, and flue all in good shape.

Into the hard part now—where it might be nice to have some moral encouragement occasionally. The family generally tolerates the strange things I do, without always understanding or appreciating them.

Right now is the time to draw up spiritual nourishment. Talking and writing don't get it. One has to dive right down into the root of the thing, which I must say is becoming more and more difficult.

"As a fish taken from his watery home and thrown on the dry ground, our thought trembles all over in order to escape the dominion of Mara, the tempter."

11:30 A.M. Things looking up. A real good and effective period of meditation. And the nausea has eased, at least for a while. Like a case of seasickness, it tends to jaundice one's entire outlook. My wood-

pecker friend is busy right at the moment. I wonder what he has in mind.

My wife thinks nothing will come of this project, just as nothing seems to have come of dozens of other unusual projects. But my view, supported by well-known scripture, is that it isn't always wise to accept wives' advice. One present problem is that I didn't consult the family sufficiently regarding my purpose. The reason was that I didn't want a negative answer.

But I know that the success of this and all other projects depends on the quantity and quality of real light that can be included in them. And if I can keep reaching the source of light successfully, then this fast will be worthwhile and successful. But if I can't, then it will be neither. So the thing to do is keep trying to uncover the light in this particular area of experience.

12:45 P.M. Successful and effective meditation means, as I see it, entering, unfolding, and charging the chakras with conscious energy. The chakras are psychic centers within the body; they have been represented by various symbols, most commonly by a series of variously petaled and colored lotuses located along the backbone as on a spindle. This, of course, is merely a symbolic representation of a fact of human consciousness that can never be adequately represented or accurately verbalized.

Classically, there are seven; some identify nine, but four are fundamental and six easily apparent. The chakras can't be identified with any physical organs or complexes within the body. *Aum, Aim, Klim, Strim*—Head, Throat, Heart, and Gut—is one Hindu mantra. *Aum, Ham, Yam, Ram, Vam, Lam*—Head, Throat, Heart, Gut, Sex, and Base—is another. When one becomes conscious of their presence, then he understands

quite well where they are. The chakras are the points of most intimate and immediate contact between human beings and that Being which is beyond phenomena.

The trouble, for me, with trying to activate these centers, especially the lower ones, has been that this leads me into a state of nausea. But my interpretation is that this has to be, that the thing to be done is to bring this bitterness into the open and eliminate it. Not pleasant, and extremely exhausting, but the necessary project to see through successfully.

6:20 P.M. Afraid my hopes were premature. However I come at it, there is still that deep bitterness in my stomach together with nausea, and then retching to get rid of it. That's my problem, along with the salivation, which prevents me from sleeping. What I need is a machine to suck up fluids like the ones used in hospitals. If I don't clear my mouth every several minutes, I gag and retch and throw up. A poor situation. Been without sleep for so long I may start to hallucinate. The mouth or the stomach will have to give—or maybe it will be me. Extremely tired. Haven't gone to the house for several days. My boy brings me water and stays with me some. Glad for his company.

Saturday, April 17

Twenty-fifth day of the fast.

10:00 A.M. A long hard night, with only a few scattered wisps of sleep. But now there are indications that the stomach turbulence, with its nausea, is coming to an end. At least, that is something I very much hope is true. It's been a bad siege, lasting about a week and a half. But everything comes to an end sometime. I haven't spared the horses trying to eliminate this bitterness from my stomach, since I feel this may be the main purpose of the fast. But the efforts have left me perfectly exhausted. Hope they are done with, at least for a while. Just resting heavily now.

1:15 P.M. A friend who visits me, and who has had some experience fasting, is somewhat amazed at the difficulties I've encountered during the last week. Far worse than anything he has experienced. He's afraid that if I write it up just like it is, most people will get discouraged and never try to fast.

Everyone's experience is different, however, and someone else's is sure to be unlike mine. The amount of energy spent on this stomach business has been quite amazing. On the other hand, I was sure it would be a problem, perhaps *the* problem, as it was before.

But maybe the worst of it is over now, and after some rest I can proceed on to other things.

2:50 P.M. Since time is passing imperceptibly, and meditation is difficult, and the heavens brass, I'll take the advice of the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* and press in upon this cloud with "the sharp shaft of piercing love." There'll probably never be a more opportune or fruitful time. And if I keep at it, I'll find the opening.

Sunday, April 18

7:05 A.M. Made elaborate preparations last evening with towels and mechanical apparatus to limit and absorb the saliva flow so as not to gag on it, and thus make it possible to get some sleep. All to no avail. Started choking the worst ever about midnight. It completely routed and disoriented me for an hour or so. Looked like I had lost the way completely.

But gradually recovered, with a few new insights. I can't think about the disaster in Vietnam or the people there. I'm much too tender, and the thing simply overwhelms me. More immediately, I'll have to be contented with very small benefits. The way to the top now is with short, slow and steady steps. No running from here on out. Just taking it easy, a little bit at a time, will have to get me there now.

There were no time-objectives set for the fast. Rather, the length is determined by the fast itself as it proceeds. The objective now for me is the cleaning up of my mouth and stomach. That could come dramatically at any time. But I don't expect it. Maybe a couple of weeks longer—who knows? But when they clear, the fast will be broken.

8:00 A.M. Cloudy, cool, and a light rain falling. Very nice. Need it badly. Been lying looking out the window considering the infinite patience of the creative spirit—working over vast aeons of time, gradually and imperceptibly molding and transforming the earth, the suns, the galaxies. How hard it is for us to be patient a few years, a few weeks, a few days, even a few minutes. But patience is the quality we so badly need.

Will go in the house, scrub up, shave, and change clothes. Company coming later.

11:50 A.M. An unusual and powerful inner perception that is different from anything that has ever occurred to me. Large crystals, very bright and beautiful, on display within my imagination—some by themselves and others in aggregate—mostly blue, but also red, violet, white, and other colors—very bright, sparkling, clear and lustrous. They appear set off by themselves with nothing around them—there is sort of a white background that could be cloth, but with no noticeable texture.

I say large, but they could be any size, since there is nothing to compare them to. They could be tiny, or they could be huge. Nothing else enters into the picture. Some appear to be cut, and others obviously aren't—just natural crystals. I've never imagined anything like them, although it is possible to imagine anything. All my previous interest in stones and crystals has been confined to reading about their beautiful and precise inner molecular and electronic structure.

For several days these inner perceptions have come and gone unbidden by me. I interpret their presence as an excellent omen.

2:40 P.M. After a night that looked almost impossible and impassible, I may be coming to a light. My

stomach is much relieved, and there is hope that this may be the end of that ordeal. Toward the last, the nausea and retching speeded up considerably. But now it seems to be gone.

That sharp, darting probe of love upon the Cloud of Unknowing is in fact our desire and will to penetrate there—a certain quantum of conscious energy (the *Cloud's* author says we have so many motions of the will each second) that is required to make the chakras objective. This effort of will hasn't failed lately to raise a nausea, but it doesn't seem to at the moment. Also, the catch in my throat that has been with me during the fast seems to be gone.

The salivation is even faster now. Perhaps it will work itself out too. Sometimes, this morning for example, it will be quite acrid, burning my tongue and lips. Once in a while it draws blood from my lips, which are very tender, as it did this morning. But the vile smell has largely cleared up, and the saliva is now of a thin watery consistency.

A word might be mentioned about hunger. I haven't wanted to eat for some time, nor do I now. I'm sure my body isn't ready to eat. And to force food on it might be most unpleasant and undesirable.

Just retched again. Hoped to be done with that. Remnants. I hope.

7:50 P.M. Must have passed out a few minutes ago. Was walking across the camper to get some things and found myself lying on the floor with my head under the writing table. Haven't any memory at all of what happened. A couple of head bruises, nothing more. First time I ever remember fainting. Am quite woozy and unsteady now. Don't think I've slept for three days

and nights. Very much in need of sleep, but the moment I doze off I begin to gag. May not sleep tonight either, since the saliva flow at the moment seems to be more rather than less.

Monday, April 19

7:55 A.M. A light snow during the night. Foggy and about freezing. Slept a little. A strange, fantastic night. Some gagging, which I had hoped to be done with. But it seems to originate farther up in the throat and trachea now. Lower organs easy, and in fact exhilarated. A much readier penetration has been made into the gut chakra, and also, I believe, into the even lower ones. This is a result I had hoped for from the fast. If it proves to be true, then the trip will have been very worthwhile.

Had thought that the fast might be coming to an end, but that may not be for a while yet. The mouth is as bad as ever. Have no idea what might happen to it. Want to begin accomplishing some really worthwhile spiritual labor—and expect to be able to do that now.

8:45 A.M. Snowing lightly. A thought: The future of humanity doesn't depend on the accidents of history, but on men's ability to open and use the deep powers and wisdom that are latent within them. These are the qualities that are able to transcend entropy and death. And this is what the future depends on.

But that future is already assured. Many men and women have developed sufficiently to be able to do this, and to have become the saviors of the rest of

humanity. God's purpose in the world and among humanity couldn't fail now even if the entire solar system were to be destroyed.

Still bringing up a dark-greenish vile-looking material. Will have to be patient for a while yet.

1:20 P.M. People are spiritual beings. "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." By this Jesus meant that he had learned how to free himself from the chains of time, karma, and mortality and would now very effectively assist men and women. It is just such assistance that we all so desperately need. Every advanced spiritual being helps us. We are advanced when others advance, and hurt by their falls.

3:00 P.M. The amazing structure of the universe—reflecting the endless and infinite details of wisdom. Everything is infinitely complex. The sky has structure, this fog has structure, the clouds have structure, the air has structure. Each individual molecule and atom has unimaginably precise structure. And even the smallest particle within atoms has structure—and unimaginable power. What an astonishing place in which we find ourselves! Infinite in every direction and in every possibility. What an opportunity! And what an error not even to try to find our purpose in this situation, or to suppose there is no possible meaning in it.

9:25 P.M. Meditating well. Quite at ease and resting. The inability to sleep, because of gagging, makes for a very queer and uneasy state of mind. Might start having hallucinations, or this may be a part of the meaning of the fast. My purpose is to seek and to find that eternally wise spirit which is able to work out all things well—even this. And I trust that it will be.

Tuesday, April 20

Twenty-eighth day of the fast.

7:00 A.M. Doing much better this morning. Slept a little, which puts a fresh face on one's whole experience. The sleeping problem may be quite different than I had been imagining it. Maybe all I need is a few minutes once in a while of deep sleep patterns. But that's what I've been unable to get. The trouble isn't so much mechanical, as I had thought, but more like an electrical relay that won't hold in. I keep getting to the point of sleeping, and also with a great need of it, but I can't hold the connection; it's always jumping out of place.

May have slept less than several hours, but that places everything in a different light. Now I know that if I dive deeply enough into that power and wisdom, this too can be held. Normally, sleeping has never presented a problem for me. I've always been able to catnap at the least opportunity. Been ribbed by guys I've worked with for stretching out and snoring whenever we had to wait a few minutes for anything. But now there's a big problem to be overcome.

Have had folks tell me they fall asleep when they try to meditate. But what's wrong with that? Maybe sleep is the thing they need. Why not keep trying?

Should we stop meditating in order to go to sleep? Why not go right on and make some progress even in our sleep?—Like a boat on the ocean at night that keeps right on course. Then we might find that

There the blue havens by the hand
Lead home the wandering sails.

9:10 A.M. A cloudy, foggy day with snow on the ground. But a meadow lark singing cheerily nearby.

Still getting a little greenish-bluish moldy-looking material up from the stomach. But it isn't coming up too hard, and it eases me all over to be rid of it. Feel confident that it can all be eliminated—to my great benefit.

A vile internal draining from the nasal passages for several days. And now the left passage has opened up until it seems to drop straight down, completely hollow, although the passages have been clear all during the fast. Perhaps there is some deeper significance to this that I don't know. Each nostril is the end, or the beginning, of the primary yogic nerves that reach up through the head and down the neck to encircle the backbone. All I know of this is theoretical, but it is probably true.

If all of our corruptions could be eliminated, what would our bodies be like? We can only form the slightest conception of this. I believe our bodies would become more clear and immutable than diamonds, and would emit light from that eternal Being deep within. Just being alive, with such a body, would be a joy and delight beyond imagination.

Don't know how long the fast will continue, but feel far more confident now of a successful end. I surely have many more resources left, so could continue

awhile. But I'd prefer to work hard and cut it short, if possible.

6:25 P.M. Am struck with a tremendous compassion for all living things, especially people. Our lives are so much poorer than what they were meant to be, what they could be and should be.

Meditation going excellently.

Hidden in the mountains
Is a marvelous market
Where mortal life
Can be exchanged
For endless bliss.

(Milarepa)

9:55 P.M. Extremely weak and woozy whenever I get up. My interpretation of this isn't that I'm running out of steam, but rather that my energy is being rapidly spent on internal labor. That, of course, is the purpose of the fast. No more is being spent externally now than I can possibly help. But inwardly my body is working full blast—and this is how I want to keep it until the fast is finished.

Wednesday, April 21

6:05 A.M. The fog and rain has lifted. My whole body feels light and easy, rests heavily, but is feeling clearer and clearer. The gut chakra became completely opaque early in the fast. Now it is almost clear, but not quite, and the whole abdomen is very clear and open. Perhaps a bit more dark green material will come up, but I doubt if there will be much. And it seems to be coming from much higher up now—that whole lower area seems to have been rather well opened.

1:30 P.M. Weighed in just now at 135 pounds. Figure I've lost about 33 pounds after four weeks.

Thursday, April 22

10:45 A.M. Thirtieth day. Resting well. Urine still somewhat dark. Plenty of time for rest and meditation. Body, stomach, throat, head, and limbs—easy, but weak. The false teeth, which I had expected would give trouble, have given none at all. There is still the saliva to be eliminated, but it is somewhat clearer. Cloudy outside, with a light snow cover. Birds singing.

To me, wisdom is understanding the meaning of our lives, of our own bodies, our experiences, and of the situations in which we find ourselves. And this is what the deep spirit alone can show us. To understand what these things mean is to be enlightened—to be illumined.

If we were truly enlightened, we would continually be trying to know that tremendous Being that is beyond phenomenal existence—which is not far away, but within the depths of every atom of our being.

Some thoughts of food, but not enticing—just passing by. My body isn't in shape for food yet, I'm sure.

Friday, April 23

9:30 A.M. The fast has been broken. There were some indications of its end yesterday, although I hardly recognized them. But last night about midnight the indications became quite evident—a great hollowness and emptiness that seemed to have opened from my mouth down to my abdomen. Well, I thought, maybe I'll break it tomorrow evening.

But as the night wore on it became more and more overpowering—either due to the physical facts or the fact that my imagination began entering into it. By morning I was becoming ravenously hungry. Breakfasted at 7:00 A.M. on an orange. Another small orange at 8:00, and again at 9:00.

Now I shall try the same amount of grapefruit. I think this might be better, and I like it better. Of course, the oranges have been delicious. May be a problem to change from one to the other, but I think not.

Weigh 139 pounds with boots and heavy sweater plus several oranges and a grapefruit.

12:15 P.M. Didn't sleep any last night, and there was a long wait for the day to come. But it was strangely worthwhile. At 4:30 A.M. the Morning Star, or daystar,

rose over the mountains in the east. Don't know whether it was Mercury or Venus.* A perfectly clear horizon for it. Then, not long after, another light appeared, which I hadn't expected and couldn't make out at first, about 10 degrees farther north. It was a pale thin new moon. I had never seen this before, or realized that in the dark of the moon it rose like that in the morning sky.

Before long, both faded into the dawn. And I watched the sun rise about 15 degrees still farther north. Hard to tell exactly when or where it would rise. But shortly before six it came—a sharp blazing point at first, and then too brilliant to look at directly. Between my fingers I watched till it was fully risen. A tremendously powerful presence. All this a beautiful and inspiring sight one seldom has the chance to see. No wonder the sun is so often the object of worship. These magnificent celestial motions are things we moderns seldom see, or have the time or opportunity to appreciate.

Such a dynamic sunrise was quite an inspiration to me. If it is an omen, I'd not want a more beautiful or impressive one.

5:40 P.M. The small amounts of citrus fruit I've taken haven't rested too easily on my stomach, although they would seem gentle enough. A Texas doctor who has conducted thousands of fasts breaks them with half a glass of orange juice each hour during the middle of the first day. This amount has seemed excessive in my case, and I've cut it back considerably. Perhaps small quantities of goat's milk might have been as well for me. But this first day, at least, will be all citrus. See about tomorrow.

My whole assimilative apparatus has been out of

*Some later checking told me that it was Venus.

use for so long, it no doubt takes a while to get it in working order again.

Having a nice rain at the moment. Very unusual and valuable in this area, especially since irrigating water is in short supply. Nicer having the rain than irrigating—easier, cheaper, evenner, and better.

Saturday, April 24

9:40 A.M. Have eaten several small oranges and grapefruits since yesterday morning. They were good, but somehow were unable to fill my need. Nor have they rested too easily on my stomach. For noon my wife is fixing a light broth from fresh vegetables. That sounds very good. We'll see.

Resting heavily, and feel a deep need of meditation, which I may have neglected a bit yesterday—and feel that this is done at my peril. If one walks on narrow places he must be all the more careful. Doing better this morning, and intend to keep doing so.

2:45 P.M. The fresh vegetable broth has been excellent. Am quite pleased with it. Vegetables are simpler and lowlier than fruits, growing close to their mother, the modest sweet-smelling earth. According to Boehme, every spirit hungers after its own likeness, and these low-growing earthlings just suit my need and condition.

My stomach really took a racking during the latter part of the fast. And the hard work it did might account for most of my energy expenditure. But I'm satisfied that it got well cleaned up and worked over. For years I had remembered this bitterness that refused to come up. Will have to treat my poor stomach gently and

respectfully in order to get it back into proper operating condition again.

The fasting conditions don't immediately cease as soon as one resumes eating. They gradually come to a stop and then slowly begin to reverse. This must take at least a few days, perhaps somewhat longer.

Monday, April 26

8:10 A.M. No entry for yesterday. It was a day of almost total physical and mental lethargy. The pendulum reaches the end of its swing, stops, and hesitates an instant before starting to return.

Established myself in a small front bedroom. Quite pleasant, with a long soft couch on which to rest, and where I'll sleep for a few days until I'm again at normal, or at least moderate, strength.

11:00 A.M. Fourth day of eating. Been eating citrus fruit and fresh vegetable broths. Not eating much, and not particularly hungry. On previous fasts of a week or more I've experienced very difficult first bowel movements, so I've inserted several small chips of cocoa butter inside the rectum. I've found that's helpful. Cocoa butter is an inexpensive commercial product, about as hard as paraffin, that melts into a thin oil just a few degrees below body temperature.

But had a bowel movement this morning that wasn't remarkable in any way except for gentleness. Obviously, everyone's experiences would have to be unique and individual, since even the same person reacts so differently at different times.

Slept well last night and awoke quite refreshed. Had a strange and vivid dream, which seems so much to

the point of my present thinking I'll record it. Several children and I were attending some sort of carnival. The place, the amusements—everything—was tawdry in every respect. Cheap is the only word that describes it. Things cost only pennies, but even so, we didn't have enough money and had no idea how we'd get home. The central feature of the carnival was a movie about a great whirlwind that carried everything up and down in the air—horses, cattle, people, all kinds of things. It was remarkable and also somewhat frightful, but seemed like old stuff to me.

Then after that I dreamed several of us went on a grand tour of Europe. Every accommodation was strictly first class, made far in advance, phoned ahead by professionals—whatever we wanted. Money was no object, and nothing was spared.

These dreams impressed me deeply. My interpretation is that everyone makes this trip through life. Poverty and affluence seem to be something important, but they're merely illusions compared with the deep meaning we should derive from experience. Everyone makes essentially the same trip (I've not the slightest desire to go to Europe), but to find the truth of life goes far deeper than outward circumstances.

This called to mind an ancient Chinese poem. An old man lives in a brush hut by a stream in the mountains. He tends his little garden and a couple of sheep. The poet meets him and lives there awhile. The place seems like heaven on earth.

But what does his friend do, the old man asks. He is the Emperor's advisor with such and such a salary. The old man laughs with amusement. Of course that can't be true. People who are rich and advise emperors never live in brush huts out in the mountains.

2:40 P.M. I must say that toward the end of the fast I entered some quite fantastic psychic states. They weren't threatening or frightening especially, although I'm sure it would be very easy for them to become threatening if one had tendencies in that direction. The human mind is a tremendously deep and mysterious thing. The possibilities within it are beyond our imaginations—but not our experience.

I have to think of the many men and women who fasted alone for long periods out in caves and deserts. What kinds of experiences might they have had? No vision or experience would have been too fantastic. Unlike some of them, I had a family, a place, an established way of life to return to, which I appreciated and which supported me.

Milarepa, the great Tibetan hermit, was also supported by a long and well-established tradition. And no doubt this has been equally true of the Sufi hermits, the Desert Fathers, etc. Modern men and women, having little or no traditional support, might become severely disturbed or psychotic if they attempted the same thing.

Fainted again Sunday morning. Was walking across the kitchen and woke up a second or two later stretched out on the floor. Apparently I made a great crash. Struck a table, but no harm done except a slightly bruised head and shoulder.

Sunday afternoon, May 2

Had some pictures taken of myself today. Should have done that sooner, but have procrastinated. I'm not photogenic and hate pictures (of myself). Nine days since I resumed eating. Weigh 150 now, a gain of over 15 pounds—still almost 20 less than at the beginning of the fast.

During the last week I've been eating three meals a day—at first small and quite simple, but now the family's regular food, and perhaps a bit more than I should. At first, the inside of my mouth was quite tender, which made chewing difficult. But that is almost gone now. I sleep well, and all physical functions appear to be about normal. Bowel movements are especially simple and easy. I'm weaker than usual and tire quickly. This may continue for a few weeks as I gradually recover the weight that was lost during the fast. I've weighed about 165 for years, and consider that to be about my normal weight—five feet, ten and a half inches tall.

There has been a subtle but noticeable change in my outlook on the world since the fast—a noticeable increase in my tolerance of other people's ideas and attitudes. It has been my practice to follow the news rather closely and to read, or at least to scan, a large number of magazines. Since the fast, my appreciation

of radio news and of magazines has altered. Their contents now seem to be much more matters of subjective opinion and less of objective fact. Philosophically, I always recognized this, but it has never seemed so apparent. News is largely fantasy, the happenings of a dreamworld.

The President's news conferences, the visits of American dignitaries abroad, pronouncements about the Suez Canal, the visit of American ping pong players to China—all parts of a big show, a show and only a show. The demonstrators in Washington threaten to tie up the city's traffic. But what if traffic didn't move for a day? Would that be some sort of catastrophe? What if the bureaus weren't manned? What if they were closed for a week, a month, a year, forever? We take ourselves too seriously. Right now I tend to be gently amused.

Saturday afternoon, May 15

Twenty-two days after the fast.

The first week following the fast was spent mostly resting and thinking. But the second and third weeks have been spent working. This has helped the private balance-of-payments situation, but is also quite tiring, since it will be a while before I recover normal strength.

Actually, the work, which some of the time is a little strenuous, hasn't been difficult or unpleasant, and I've been glad to do it. But it hasn't left me with any energy for entries in this journal. Several more should complete it, and there seems no need of hurrying them.

Several friends have been concerned that a long fast could easily hurt a person. This seems unlikely, and I don't think it has happened to me. I'll be thinner, weaker and hungrier for another month or so, but I'm sure the fast has helped me physically, mentally and spiritually. I feel well, eat well, sleep soundly, eliminate perfectly, have an easier mind about future circumstances, and in general entertain a more tolerant and philosophical view of the world than I did before the fast.

Have also recovered my zest for reading. I can be

almost too tired to move and still enjoy books that many people imagine to be pretty stiff sledding. Have read six or eight thoughtfully during the last several weeks, and scanned perhaps an equal number.

Among the more interesting to me was a recently published journal by an American military doctor who was with the group studying the effects of the Hiroshima bomb.

He was shocked at what he saw and has a measure of compassion for the victims. Yet he fails to appreciate the fact that before, during, and after the bombing, the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were used solely as scientific guinea pigs. And even the Japanese scientists can be included within the same indictment. Technical knowledge—that's the *summum bonum*. I too have a monkey's curiosity about things. But in the face of such tremendous moral and physical tragedy and need, I would hope to overcome that monkey nature.

Of course, the argument goes that scientific curiosity is the basic support of all our moral and physical needs. That's a faith that is now being tried in the fire of experience. And although there are still many true believers, I'm not among them. My opinion is that science and its child, technology, is failing, and that the time may be near when it will be seen to have failed disastrously. I could be wrong. Time will tell.

An interesting fact in the doctor's account is that about a month after the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima the radioactivity there was about ten times background. After several years we can assume it had dropped to slightly above background. In other words, it is as the Atomic Energy Commission claims—the city and its victims received almost no fallout, only initial radiations.

But in Grand Junction, a city of 20,000 about 50

miles from where I live, the *constant* background in many places from uranium mill tailings, a beautiful radium-bearing sand that has been used in construction under streets, sidewalks, lawns, houses, churches, schools, etc., is up to ten times background, and in places higher. The U.S. Surgeon General has recommended bringing that exposure to within 1135 millirem per year, (mR/yr). That figure is all hard gamma radiation, and doesn't include the internal alpha radon daughter lung exposure which many believe is presenting the greatest danger. The average natural U.S. exposure is 130 mR/yr. And the present controversy over public radiation exposure standards is over an added 170 mR/yr. The Atomic Energy Commission maintains that the nuclear establishment's activities will never expose the public to even a small fraction of that allowed dose.

Of course, nothing at all has been done there as of now to reduce this exposure, and may not for years, if ever. The people there, and in other towns where uranium mill tailings are scattered, are guinea pigs too. And scientists are extremely curious about what will happen to them. A difference worth noting is that, unlike the citizens of Grand Junction, the Japanese victims reject that role vigorously and with anger. One consequence of this is that many of the radiation symptoms of the Japanese survivors no doubt originate in their imaginations, whereas the effects of excessive radiation on Coloradans will be solidly physical—at least at first.

The most immediate and obvious effect of radiation exposure is an increased leukemia rate, and there is now evidence of this in Nevada and Utah communities that have received heavy fallout from bomb tests. Not

enough time has elapsed yet to find this among tailings victims—but it may be beginning.

On the other hand, leukemia is an extremely rare disease. There were 122 leukemia victims in Hiroshima, this doctor tells us—a tremendously high rate. But all forms of cancer taken together are very common causes of death, and the evidence indicates that radiation induces all forms of cancer in about the same proportion as leukemia. It is merely that most cancers have far longer incubation periods than leukemia. This has become evident by now among the Japanese survivors, although it is still years away for American uranium-tailings victims. But when it arrives. . . .

Friday, May 28

Five weeks now since the end of the fast. Beautiful spring weather here, bright and warm, everything green and growing. About ten pounds underweight still, but strength and even ambition returning to normal.

For three weeks after the resumption of eating I ate three meals a day regularly. Two Fridays ago I fasted the day, as I have done regularly for years—but found it was difficult. Became extremely hungry during the afternoon, and also somewhat weak. Must have been still a ways behind, and also out of the habit.

Haven't been eager to push myself in this respect, so have merely eliminated breakfast, which is quite easy to do. Today I'll fast again. Want to gradually work back into my old habit of fasting Wednesdays and Fridays and eating only two meals a day on other days. But perhaps suddenly will be more effective than gradually.

When and how one eats is, in my experience, primarily a matter of habit. We require food when we are in the habit of expecting it. Self-discipline in eating isn't hard, just a matter of altering habits that have been deeply established over a long period of time.

Another difficulty in my own case is that fruits and vegetables are always in short supply during May and June. What little there is here is of poor quality and often beyond the reach of our budget. Usually lettuce

and spinach is ready from our garden by now, but that will be late this year. Then in July there are fresh garden things, sweet cherries, apricots; and soon after, peaches, apples, melons, etc. A promise of that abundance is now appearing in our own large garden—but cut back some by a light freeze about a week ago. Apricots here (we have several trees) are frozen back to only a taste. Not many peaches, but lots of cherries and apples.

My own experience is that raw fruits, vegetables, and nuts sustain me much longer and better and make me less hungry between meals. At the moment we have an abundance of our own meat, milk, and eggs, along with canned fruit and vegetables. But I'll be glad when the fresh fruits and vegetables become available. Then a more disciplined eating habit will be easier to establish and follow.

Have recently read two new books, *A Time for Hysteria: The Citizen's Guide to Disarmament*, and *The Steam Powered Automobile: An Answer to Air Pollution*,¹⁸ that appear to address themselves to two altogether different subjects. Yet they carry remarkably identical messages. The first considers the depth of nuclear terror and the attempts that have been and are being made to negotiate disarmament. The second considers how cars are choking people and the attempts that have been and are being made to reduce harmful emissions.

But neither of these problems is about to be solved for the simple reason that there is no real (effective) desire to solve them. Nuclear deterrence and internal combustion engines aren't about to be given up no matter how threatening or lethal they may be—no matter how many individuals are destroyed by them, or entire cities, or even the whole world. Too many people are vitally interested in maintaining these several systems of power and destruction.

Disarmament is eyewash. No negotiator, we are told, has ever given up so much as a slingshot, and doesn't intend to. In a similar way, Detroit pays lip service to reducing emissions, but its heart (and money) is elsewhere. An irresistible inertia drives both processes on to their apparently unavoidable denouement.

Attended a U.S. Senate hearing held not far from here yesterday. It concerned the huge complex of electric generating stations being built in the Four Corners, a high desert area about two hundred miles southwest of here where Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico meet. Had never been to anything like this before. Very interesting. Several hundred people, all opposed except power-company officials and employees. The Four Corners area may become the largest power-generating center in the world, and also have world-record polluters.

From the clearest and cleanest air to the dirtiest and most poisonous in one big leap: strip mining over many square miles, putting those Kentucky and West Virginia operations in the shade; and water for the big slurry pipelines to be pumped up from deep wells, lowering the water table drastically. The whole area will be completely ruined. Topsoil on that dry windy desert won't return for centuries, if ever. The springs and wells on which the Navahos, Hopis and Utes depend for drinking water will dry up, and the vegetation will be poisoned from the smokestacks.

The smoke will be scrubbed as well as can be. This is said to take out 99.5 percent—all the large visible particles. But it leaves all the worst poisons and smog producers. They are tiny and invisible and hang in the air for days, or even years. Of course, the power isn't for local consumption, but for Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Phoenix, etc. This will be the *coup de grâce* for the

remnants of Indian culture, and will ruin a large surrounding area. No need visiting Grand Canyon, or Mesa Verde, or Monument Valley, Bryce, Canyonlands, Dead Horse Point, Arches, Rainbow Bridge, or such western attractions anymore. There'll be nothing to see, and the air there will burn folks' eyes just like at home. People who are aware of what is happening are up in arms.

The hearing was chaired by our state's senior senator, a pleasant, smooth, dignified fellow, born and bred to chair meetings, remember names, and kiss babies. The hearing was a pure political operation throughout: a way to campaign, meet the people, work, and earn money and prestige all at the same time—which of course all politicians must continually do.

The witnesses were all arranged in perfect order according to political weight and how much good they could be expected to do the chairman. Amusing really. I'm so politically stupid that elementary arrangement had never occurred to me—just a show, but a pretty good one. No wonder that perceptive young folks display contempt for such proceedings. George Reedy, who has seen inside of that cup and is certainly no longhair, ends his recent book, *The Twilight of the Presidency*, with an unusual and unexpected tribute to the younger generation—to their perception, courage, and honesty in coming to grips with the cynical wasteland of modern politics.

The news today is that the Secretary of the Interior is declaring a year's moratorium on building this huge Four Corners complex. But that impressive pronouncement is pure fakery also—pure political hot air, full of sound and fury but signifying nothing. Contracts already given can go ahead and build. And of course there can't be a moratorium on planning. But also, of

course, where contracts aren't even given there'd be no building for a year anyway. So the big machine will go ahead exactly as it would have without this beautiful gesture. A mere beating of the air in order to placate public sentiment. Pure politics—how to get something in return for nothing. But even children are beginning to see through such things.

Is our modern expenditure of such large quantities of energy for our private or public pleasure and comfort a good or a bad thing? Obviously, it is a good thing. But some of the factors in that mix haven't been at all obvious.

Are we willing to sacrifice our lives, our children's lives, or possibly even the future integrity of the planet in order to enjoy the pleasures of power for a season? Many are. But responsible people should think a little more about that.

Sunday afternoon, June 6

Six weeks now since the fast was ended, long enough for some sort of an evaluation. Generally speaking, I'm satisfied with how things went and with the aftereffects so far. I could have hoped for more earthshaking results, or perhaps expected less. Frankly, I wasn't sure what to expect, and had no definite or clear-cut objectives in mind. It was an adventure, and memorable in many ways. Now I know things I didn't know before.

I'm a few pounds lighter than when the fast began, but unless I rein in my appetite, I may be a few pounds heavier before long. My strength is about normal again, and apparently all my physical and mental functions are in as good condition as before, or better. A real solid bond exists between the upper and lower chakras, so I can't think there was any loss in these areas, but rather a gain. The long-range effects of the fast are hard to judge. My philosophy assumes there would be a gain. But in regard to that, even experience can be deceptive. Wrong actions many times afford short-range benefits but long-range liabilities, while worthwhile actions sometimes produce short-range liabilities but, we must assume, long-range benefits.

One obvious effect of the fast has been a slackening of my ambition and drive to action. But this may be returning. Until just a few days ago I must confess to an

unusual degree of laziness. There are a number of things I feel required to do—a certain amount of work and business, things to do around the ranch, gardening, correspondence, and various intellectual, literary, and community projects in which I am involved. I've been working at all these various things but not putting a whole lot into them—just coasting. This journal, for example. I hadn't thought about or looked at what I had written until a few days ago, when I finally got around to typing it up in a presentable form, and also thinking about this concluding entry.

There's a philosophical basis for this slackening of ambition, a gentler and more relaxed approach to my own and the world's problems: It's a big show—sad, but also amusing. Immediately following the fast I couldn't take “newsworthy” or “important” people and events seriously at all. They appeared so ridiculous. The course of wisdom seemed to be to stand back and watch, or maybe not watch, the various facets of the human struggle.

But that, I'm sure, isn't the proper attitude. Also, the pressure of events goads us into action whatever our philosophy. I have to remember Krishna's advice to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Arjuna comes, as does perhaps every thinking person or spiritual aspirant, to the place where his struggle seems frivolous, perhaps even wrong. What one has to do is purify his motives. Men must struggle for truth and justice because it's their human duty. Goodness has to be its own reward. That's how it is. To do our duty with some sort of extrinsic reward in mind just doesn't get it. In this respect, Hinduism has been more perceptive than Christianity.

As Krishna says to Arjuna: “You have the right only to work, and not to the fruits of work. Don't be

motivated by the fruits of action or attached to inaction. Miserable indeed are those who work for results."

I'm writing this near the top of Grand Mesa, where I've hiked a mile or so back along a trail—leaning against a fallen tree looking out over a broad meadow with several little lakes in it. Just as I was starting to quote the *Gita*, a shot rang out nearby—pretty heavy, maybe a 30.06. The spot I'm in is among the trees and fairly hidden. Not wanting to get shot or knowing where it originated, I picked up my jacket, which has a bright red lining, and draped it over the log by me. Then another shot, and a couple of fellows several hundred yards away coming around a hill on my left. Don't think they've seen me, and don't know what they're shooting at. No game in season now. We tend to avoid these places during hunting season, a couple of weeks in the fall.

It is four o'clock right now. A beautiful early-summer day. The sun bright and the air chilly. Occasionally a cloud passes over. The altitude is 10,000 feet, or a bit more. Lots of spruce, with patches of aspen. The aspen and oak brush farther down the south side of the mountain are all leafed out, but they have not even started to leaf out up here. Lots of water running; boggy underfoot in places. I had to keep to the open meadows because there is still lots of snow among the trees—patchy, and four or five feet deep in places. Soft, slushy, and dirty.

The meadow in front of me is echoing with what sounds like a hundred bullfrogs, but it may be only several. Beyond the meadow in the distance, maybe 60 miles, is the West Elk range, all snow-covered. Several ducks flew overhead a few minutes ago but didn't land. A lot of early flowers, mostly yellow and

white, but also some purple. Several of the lower meadows were covered with bright carpets of dandelions—which I think are beautiful. Right beside me are some ants, very busy. Some are large and black, half an inch long; others are red and tiny; and some are sizes and colors in between. We don't bother each other. They examine me, and I examine them. I doubt if I'm as interesting as they are.

Some aspects of the fast weren't what I'd expected. I had thought it would be longer. And the last half of it was harder than I'd anticipated. I didn't really know what to expect, actually. I thought it might get steep right at the end. I've read that retching is one of the most difficult processes to be met with, but that it is usually over quickly, not more than several days. It racked me for several weeks, and that expenditure of energy no doubt shortened the fast. I'd have preferred a longer and gentler trip, but this is what I got.

Someone else's experience would be altogether different. And I'd certainly not expect the same thing if I were to do it again.

I'm not sure whether keeping a journal shortened the fast, but it probably did. Those who have had experience conducting fasts do all they can to discourage any expenditure of physical, emotional, or mental energy.

One unfavorable result of the fast has been that I haven't reestablished my old weekly eating routine yet. I don't eat breakfast, which is easy, and have fasted several Fridays, which was hard. When there was work that had to be done, I've not fasted (most of the time). But I expect to reestablish my old habits again soon—when fresh fruits and vegetables are plentiful here. Mealtime is nine-tenths habit.

With one exception I had no visions or hallucinations, and had expected none. That exception was the strange visions of crystals of all shapes and colors that kept appearing to me. They are still vivid in my mind—very beautiful, clear, lustrous. A valuable memory and, I hope, reality behind that memory.

A thought and perception very prominent in my mind near the end of the fast, although I didn't record it, was Boehme's idea that the spiritual deep is like the sky, in that there is an unending variety in it. Sometimes the sky is bright, sometimes dark; sometimes hot, sometimes cold; sometimes wet, sometimes dry; sometimes calm, sometimes violent; sometimes beautiful, sometimes threatening. We see a never-recurring pattern of clouds, and in the distance the never-recurring patterns of suns, moons, planets, stars, and countless other things beyond our knowledge.

The spiritual sky is the eternally creative imagination, full of an infinite variety of ideas concerning motion, form, quality, etc. From that deep comes every possible motion, form, and quality in nature—constantly changing, rising and falling. All the patterns and motions of history come from it, all the different styles of body, mind, and perception. Some styles are more enduring, but all of them change and go out of fashion in time. All political, social, and technical forms are styles. They are the weather, winds, clouds, storms, calms, or meteors that cross the great deep for a time. And then they pass away. They have to; it's inevitable. Yet the great deep, the eternal mind, is never in danger of running out of fresh, new, exciting, wonderful, and unexpected ideas.

The thing that has spoken most clearly and powerfully to my own thinking and perception since the fast has been Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching*. I hadn't read it

through for many years, but have several translations. Judging from the differences between the various versions, the original certainly must be enigmatic. I have been making my own paraphrase of what I think he may have meant. It is merely for my own use, to explore and to help my own understanding of what he wrote.

Since it so perfectly represents my present attitude, as well as the message I'd choose to leave, this journal will be closed with my paraphrase of Lao Tzu's 14th verse.

Something Formless

There is something no eye has ever seen,
Ear heard, or reason understood.
But what no sense can possibly perceive,
Or idea grasp,
Can be realized in meditation.

We might look upward forever, and still
Never see its brilliance, or downward
Without recognizing its ultimate firmness.

This mystery is present everywhere,
But it isn't of the same nature as things
That can be subjected to analysis, and all
Descriptions of it are merely tentative.

Learning to center attention There,
The mind begins to become clear
As open space, recognizing
The form of the formless.

That mystery faces everyone,
Continually leading us where
We didn't know we wanted to go!

Now, whoever keeps summoning up the courage
To be constantly attentive to naked truth,

Obediently following wherever That leads,
Becomes a child of the perfectly hidden mystery.

Then men become more and more inseparably
Identified with the power and wisdom
That created heaven and earth.

Afterword — October

Six months beyond the fast, and the reader might be interested in my present perspective on it.

There has been an abundance of local fruit as well as vegetables from our garden, and I have regained my former weight and strength. From a purely physical point of view the fast has made no noticeable changes. I had no particular physical problems then and have none now. Theoretically, I'd assume I'd be in better condition now, but I have no obvious criterion by which to judge that. Much of our work has been installing heating systems and requires climbing and crawling through narrow places and working under houses. If anything, my body has seemed a bit less flexible, but then the time is coming for someone younger to do that. I've worked at manual labor for over thirty years, and although that can be valuable experience, there are also other things to be done in the world.

The fast didn't improve my eating discipline. If anything, it weakened it. For several months I paid little attention to this, but now I am back into a more temperate habit, preferring not to make a big issue out of it, but rather to do the correct thing easily and habitually. What works for me is to decide consciously when and what to eat, then stick to it, and at mealtime to eat a certain amount and no more. In that way my appetite

is controlled by my intellect. On the other hand, if my appetite is allowed to take its own course without any rational supervision, it quickly involves itself in all kinds of mischief.

The short but provocative ninth-century Zen text quoted earlier includes, along with profound metaphysical speculations, this paragraph on eating: "There is sensual eating and wise eating. When the physical body suffers from the pangs of hunger and you provide it with food without permitting greed to arise, that is called wise eating. But if you seek delight in flavors, you permit distinctions which arise from wrong thinking. Only seeking to gratify the organs of taste without realizing when you have taken enough is called sensual eating. *Commentary.* This paragraph seems curiously out of place and may have been inserted by mistake."

Of course, the paragraph is neither mistaken nor out of place. Eating isn't any less intimately related to enlightenment than, for example, thinking. The original writer understood this elemental earthy fact quite clearly, and the scholarly commentator apparently doesn't. It's a very obvious and almost universal error, at least among self-important people, always to aim too high. Remember, brothers, observed Thomas Aquinas, that we are men and not angels.

But what of the more central and less physical aims of the fast? What success or failure there? The deepest and perhaps the most enduring effect of the fast hasn't, I feel, been sufficiently emphasized. This was a deep impression that gathered momentum during the last week of the fast and then gradually receded during the weeks following: a very intimate perception of the world as illusion.

As an intellectual proposition this may appear trite, but as a perception in the marrow of the bones it isn't

trite at all, and profoundly disturbing, or in another sense, quieting. I will try to explain.

There was no perception of the world as evil—nothing like that at all. Nor did my experience seem to lack reality. What it lacked was rigidity. Experience seemed real enough, but it was the usual interpretation of that experience that seemed so far removed from truth. The illusion was our mistaken interpretation of experience. Jacob Boehme used a word that may not be popular nowadays: magic—not meaning by that anything hocus pocus or bad. His whole world-view was based on magic, and so, I suppose, is mine. A magic latent in the power of imagination and desire to create the strange, beautiful, and unexpectedly complex world of nature we find everywhere around us.

My own deep impression of the world as illusion wasn't the result of reason or logic. And I wonder if many other people, in extremities, perhaps facing death, don't have similar perceptions of the world as illusion? It made me look tolerantly and with some amusement on the activities that occupy us so constantly and so urgently, and that we think are so important.

Now the world appears solid again. But philosophically I doubt it, and always will. I assume that things are three-dimensional and can be handled in the traditionally accepted manner. Yet this is only tentative. Deep down, I know that everything is magic—based, that is, on the strange magic of imagination, will, and desire.

Let me recount a vivid dream I had several days after ending the fast. It seemed the family and I were visiting a kind of museum, a place with most remarkable displays. The children were much younger than they are now, and we went from floor to floor, finally coming out on the roof, which also had displays. It was

a bright winter day, with snow on the rooftop. In some way we could never seem to understand, my wife and I became separated from the children. We searched and searched. There just wasn't anywhere they could have gone. She became somewhat frantic, and I was certainly concerned. It wasn't a large place, there was nowhere to hide, the door we had come through was locked, and the attendant assured us the children hadn't gone out.

Finally I explained the situation to the attendant, a very kindly and understanding person. He told us that on the lower floors it does seem to people that they have children, but when they get up there they see that this was an illusion. Immediately I could see that he told us the truth.

Then I woke up and thought about it for a long time—and I still think about it.

Children and family are among the deepest human ties and experiences. Are they also illusion? In any case, that was the dream. Somehow it seemed a very profound and symbolic thing, and it illustrates my state of mind at the time.

Something else that came directly from the fasting experience was a renewed interest in Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching*. This seemed, and still seems, the very epitome of practical wisdom. And I began writing a paraphrase, my impression of Lao Tzu's thought.

Before the fast began I had hoped it might be a means of seeing more deeply into the elemental structure of the material world. For several years this has been a more or less consuming interest. I'm convinced that Jacob Boehme, 350 years ago, did have remarkable insights into a world whose dimensions are too small, and also too large, to come within the range of men's normal senses—the world of nuclear, molecular, and genetic phenomena. Modern scientific knowledge in

these fields seems now to have a tremendously profound bearing on human fate, the fate of this planet and perhaps all of nature. I had thought to try to probe some of these areas intellectually during the fast.

But in fact I never once came close to doing that, or even attempting it. My thinking took an altogether different and somewhat unexpected direction. However, during the time since the fast I've come up with what I think may be some very excellent ideas and insights in that area, which I'll be working up into a book on the subject. Although it is generally thought to be impossible, I'm sure that Boehme had remarkable and valid insights into how material substance is created or comes into existence. His ideas illuminate brilliantly many aspects of modern physical theory and go a long way toward explaining the profound significance of nuclear energy.

In view of this delayed benefit, it seems an error to judge the value of any course of action—for example, dieting, or fasting, or the use of drugs—before all the results are in. The most important effects may have a much longer range than our patience. What will be the effects months, years, possibly even generations from now? Those are the difficult questions. I believe fasting can in many cases produce extremely long-range benefits.

Something should be said about how this journal happened to be written. A friend, Richard Curtis, whom I came to know through our mutual activity opposing the radioactive poisoning of the earth, encouraged me to write it. The desire to fast, and the first thought of the value of keeping a journal of that fasting experience were, of course, my own. But it was the possibility of the venture becoming a readable book that caused this idea to become more than just another passing thought.

The practical vision has been almost completely his.

It may be that this fast, and what issues from it, will profoundly alter both the internal and external circumstances of my life. And if, as I would hope, this book could also be a factor in altering the lives of friends unknown to me, helping in some small measure to propel them to the other shore, then the credit will be due to this friend's perceptive encouragement coming just when it was needed most.

Notes

¹Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *The Science of Being and the Art of Living* (New York: Signet Books, 1968).

²Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Beginning and the End* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957).

³Jacob Boehme, *Six Theosophic Points* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1958).

⁴*The Science of Being and the Art of Living* (New York: Signet Books, 1968).

⁵Richard Wilhelm, translator, *The Secret of the Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life*, European commentary by C. G. Jung (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1931. Another edition was published in New York in 1967 by Harcourt, Brace and World.

⁶Mohandas K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957). Quotes following (pp. 45, 46, 47) are from same source.

⁷Arnold Ehret, *Rational Fasting* (Beaumont, California: Ehret Literature, 1965).

⁸Emanuel Swedenborg, *Heaven and Its Wonders, and Hell*, chapter 36, paragraph 326 (Swedenborg Foundation, 51 East 42nd St., New York City, 1950).

⁹Richard Wilhelm, translator, *The Secret of the Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life*. European commentary

by C. G. Jung (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1931).

¹⁰Quoted in Ernest Gordon's *A Book of Protestant Saints* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1946).

¹¹Jacob Boehme, *The Signature of All Things* (New York: E. P. Dutton; London, J. M. Dent & Sons, n.d.).

¹²Author's paraphrase of the King James Version, James 3. 3-10.

¹³*The Huang Po Doctrine of Universal Mind*, translated by Chu Ch'an (London: The Buddhist Society, 1947).

¹⁴in *The Wisdom of India and China*, Lin Yutang, editor (New York: Random House, 1942).

¹⁵in *Muslim Saints and Mystics: Episodes from the Tadhkirat al-Auliya'* by Farid al-Din Attar, translated by A. J. Arberry (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

¹⁶Mortimer Lasky, *A Time for Hysteria: The Citizen's Guide to Disarmament* (Cranbury, N. J.: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1969).

Andrew Jamison, *The Steam Powered Automobile: An Answer to Air Pollution* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1970).

